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The Works of
CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

WITH A GENERAL INTRODUCTION BY
JULES CLARETIE

CHERAMI

VOL. I

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY
EDITH MARY NORRIS



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CHAPTER I

THE OMNIBUS OFFICE AND SOME OF ITS PATRONS

THE omnibus office to which we are about to introduce our readers was conveniently situated at the Porte Saint-Martin, at the angle formed by the boulevard and the Rue de Bondy, in the house of the Deffieux restaurant, that celebrated place of entertainment being one of those where the greater part of the wedding parties in Paris are held.

So popular is this establishment on these occasions, that in passing there in the evening, and often in the middle of the night, you may see windows brilliantly lighted on the first floor, on the second floor, on the Place or on the boulevard, sometimes all over the house; for it is not rare for them to have four or five weddings on the same evening at Deffieux's. That does not put the proprietor and his people out at all; they have rooms to accommodate their numerous guests, and if hard put to it I really believe they would go so far as to put tables out on the boulevard.

And there is dancing going on everywhere, on all sides: here, the ball is very elegant; there, it

is bourgeois; above, it borders a little on the proletary; but it is not perhaps at this last that people amuse themselves least. At any rate, it is certain that there they make the most noise.

What a house of pleasure! It seems to me that those who live in it must always be cheerful and continually keep a leg in the air ready to dash into the dance. However, that perhaps would be rather fatiguing, but how can one avoid having a desire to give one's self up to merriment when one is incessantly seeing happy people who dance or drink or eat or sing or make sweet eyes at each other, or squeeze each other's hands with all the effusiveness of friendship? People are so expansive at the end of a bountiful repast; everybody is intimate, everybody is pleased, everybody loves everybody else.

You will perhaps tell me that these feelings hardly last during the time of digestion; that even these joyous weddings, where the couple look at each other and speak to each other with so much love in the eyes and expression in the voice, before the end of the year are sometimes transformed into gloomy and afflicting scenes. There are a good many persons who have dared to say that in marriage there are only two perfectly happy days; that on which it begins and that on which it ends; like journeys: the one on which one starts and the one on which one returns.

But people say so many things which are not

so. I have known a good many travellers who were happy to run about the world, and who were never in a hurry to return to their own hearths. I like to believe that it is the same with married people; and that, having once set up a household, there are many who find themselves very happy and have no desire for anything else.

But what the devil am I talking about, when we ought already to be in the omnibus ticket office, where they take the buses for Belleville, La Villette, Saint-Sulpice, Grenelle and a great many other neighborhoods, all more or less distant the one from the other?

One may also purchase at this office little bottles of scent, flasks of perfumed vinegar, blacking and pomatum. Trade slips in everywhere; not that there is the least harm in that, trade is the life of nations and of individuals. Everybody trades in something, even those who do not suspect it.

It was fine weather, it was the middle of the month of June and it was a Saturday; three circumstances which had necessarily brought an influx of people into the omnibus office and to the Deffieux restaurant. This restaurant attracts me in spite of myself, I must revert to it still; that is to say, I do not revisit it against my will, but enter it very cheerfully, on the contrary, for everything is very good there. But you know, or you do not know—but it will lead me away again too far if you do not know—I will therefore con-

tinue. You know that Saturday is the day on which most of the wedding feasts are held. Wherefore? I think I have already told you that somewhere; but no matter, let it be as though I had not told you: Saturday is the eve of Sunday and everything is explained in that one word; on Sunday the clerks do not go to their offices, and clerks are great people for marrying; on Sunday working men do not labor, and working men also like to set up their households; in fact, Sunday is the day of rest and they assert that one has need of rest on the day after his wedding. Why, do you say? Come now, don't ask me such questions as that. One thing is certain and it is, that from Saturday night to Sunday is one of the most beautiful nights in the week, even when the moon does not shine.

But, confound it, here I am again at the restaurant. You will think that I am very fond of these houses, will you not? Well, frankly, you will not be wrong. I love to frequent them. I often hear people say, "Don't talk to me about restaurant cooking, it is detestable." But these people do not think anything good but pot-au-feu, leg of mutton and roast beef.

Well, there are classics in the art of cooking dishes. O Robert! O Brillat-Savarin! O Bercoux! It was not for such people as those that you wrote and composed such delicious things. But reassure yourselves, past masters in the art

of cooking! to whom we owe so much, there are still people with palates which taste your merit, which appreciate your science and which do not put to shame your succulent inventions.

Saturday in summer is, too, the day that a good many people choose to go into the country and stay there until Monday. On this day, therefore, a great many more omnibuses run; for each one is in a hurry to get there, whether it be at the railway station or whether it be in the neighborhood where the coaches are stationed which take one to the part of the country one wishes to visit. There was, then, a crowd in the office of the Porte Saint-Martin. The clerk who had charge of giving the numbers did not know which one to listen to first; he had to be very careful to avoid committing an error, the more so that the travellers did not always confine themselves to asking for a ticket or a number. They added to their demands, reflections, questions, and often very incongruous recriminations.

"A ticket for La Villette."

"Here you are, monsieur."

"When does one start for there?"

"When the omnibus passes, monsieur."

"Will it be long before it gets here?"

"I don't think so, monsieur."

"A ticket for Belleville, if you please."

"Oh, good heavens! I have number seventy-five.

Does that mean that seventy-four persons are before me?"

"No, madame, we are at the fiftieth."

"Then there are still twenty-five people before me?"

"There are some of those who will not wait, who will not answer when they are called and that advances the others."

"A number for Saint-Sulpice."

"Here it is."

"Where is the bus?"

"It'll be here directly."

"Oh, so I must wait. That's not very amusing, that isn't."

"Why, monsieur, we can't always have buses ready to start."

"And why can't you, eh? It would be a great deal more agreeable for the travellers; but they never put themselves out of the way to satisfy the travellers. I shall have to complain to the management."

"Complain as much as you like, monsieur, that doesn't matter to us."

"Why, yes, it does concern you, it ought to concern you, since it is with you that they do business. What do you mean by answering in that way? Is that the way you treat travellers here? It seems to me that you should have a little more respect for them."

The gentleman who was going to Villette came back towards the clerk.

"Will you tell me if I have time to go and buy a cake at the pastrycook's?"

"Why, monsieur, nobody prevents you from going. Here's the bus from Grenelle. Those for Grenelle—get aboard."

"I asked you if I had time to go and get a cake before the bus comes."

"The Place des Victoires! Who's going to the Place des Victoires?"

"Will you answer me about my cake?"

"Yes, monsieur, yes, yes; go to the pastrycook's." And the clerk turned toward his comrade muttering, "What does he bother me about his cake for? Where should we be if everybody put such questions to us?"

A lady of about forty, and enormously stout, came in dragging with her two little boys, one of eight and the other of four years of age, dressed like those little educated dogs which do tricks on the boulevards and who, probably in the precipitation with which they left the house, had for a long time past forgotten to use their pocket handkerchiefs.

A maid loaded with an enormous basket, from whence escaped the tails of some whiting and the heads of some leeks, and a round cardboard box, ill-fastened with twine, which was lumpy and broken in several places, followed her mistress, looking sulky and catching everybody with her basket and her box without asking to be excused,

but appeared to be making grimaces at those against whom she bumped.

"Monsieur, I want two places for Romainville—for me and my chambermaid. My little ones won't have to pay, because we shall hold them on our knees."

"Madame, that boy is certainly more than five years of age; he must be paid for."

"Monsieur, don't I tell you that I shall hold him on my knees, so I shall only occupy one place with him."

"That will very likely inconvenience your neighbors."

"It seems to me that people don't go in an omnibus to be comfortable. Aristoloche, where are you going to? Stay near your nurse, monsieur. Adelaide, why don't you pay some attention to the little fellow? You know how petulant he is."

Mademoiselle Adelaide, who looked a good deal more like a cook than a chambermaid, had gone with her parcels and settled herself on a bench between an old gentleman and an old lady whom she had made bound again as though they were made of rubber. The disturbance had been so violent that the old lady had uttered an exclamation, imagining that she had been electrified. The gentleman, very displeased at the manner in which the maid had come and placed herself beside him, and perceiving that the whittings'

tails, which protruded from the basket, were brushing the cuff of his coat, pushed the basket with his elbow, exclaiming,—

“What kind of way is that to sit yourself down, throwing yourself like that upon people? Take care what you are doing, mademoiselle, and oblige me by withdrawing your basket. I don’t care for your fish to rub my cuffs and make them smell.”

“What’s that? what did you say? What’s the matter now, old fellow?”

“I asked you to take your basket away, I don’t want to have it under my nose.”

“Where do you want me to put my basket then? On the ground, perhaps, to have it stolen from me. Thank you for nothing! it would be very nice when we got to the country to find nothing to eat there. What harm does the basket do you?”

“It poisons me.”

“Leave it alone then; it’s you who are poisoning it.”

“I shall complain to the travellers who are with you. They will be willing to oblige me.”

“Hold your tongue, why don’t you, you old cucumber? You want to be as fresh as my fish.”

The epithet, “old cucumber,” had greatly provoked the gentleman, who rose muttering,—

“If you were not a woman, I would make you eat your words.”

"Oh, well, you'd have something to do, then, for I am inclined to say as much more to you."

"Why, Adelaide, I beg of you to look after Aristoloche a little. He is going out of the office."

"Well, so much the worse, madame; I can't do everything; I've quite enough to do now taking care of your box and the basket—and answering this invalid."

"Invalid, do you dare to call me an invalid?"

"La Villette. Here is the bus. Monsieur, you are for La Villette. Make haste!"

These words were addressed to the old gentleman who had been disputing with Mademoiselle Adelaide, and who did not leave the office until he had darted a furious glance at the maid, who laughed in his face and went to slap young Aristoloche, the little boy of four years who, in spite of his mamma's orders, obstinately insisted on going out of the office.

"Well, monsieur," resumed the stout lady, drawing down over her eldest son's eyes a little gray felt hat of Henry IV shape, which was surrounded with feathers which drooped all around it like the leaves of a palm-tree; "we shall have places for Romainville, I hope."

"Madame, we don't give tickets for Romainville, but for Belleville. There you will find, at the office, the coach which goes to Romainville."

"Oh, you don't give places here for Romain-

ville? That's very disagreeable; shall I have to pay again when I take the other coach?"

"Yes, madame; but if you ask for checks you will only have four sous, twenty centimes to pay."

"For each person?"

"Of course."

"That's very dear, too. Narcisse, will you keep your hat down, you are going to lose it. You know very well that it fell off just now on the boulevard and just missed being trodden on; it is very pretty, your fine Henry IV hat."

"It bothers me, the feathers make me squint."

"Hold your tongue, you little rascal; your aunt bought you this hat and you won't have another one for two years to come."

"You'll have to take off the feathers, then."

"Silence, you don't deserve to be elegantly dressed."

"Oh, yes, elegant; all the little boys make game of me. They say that I look like a Jack-Pudding."

"They are naughty boys. They say that from envy, because they would like to have a hat like yours. Well, monsieur, can you tell me for certain whether I shall find a place in this other bus?"

"Why, I can't affirm it, but even if you can't get a place in one, you'll get it in another."

"Do they start often?"

"Every twenty minutes."

"Wait twenty minutes? Why that's frightful.

How sorry I am that I promised my aunt that I would go and dine with her to-day."

"The more so," muttered the maid; "that when they go to dine with the aunt they must carry their dinners. Thank you! a pretty invitation! Well, there are people who don't ruin themselves by giving dinners."

"See here, give me two tickets for Belleville."

"Here they are, madame."

"Aristoloche, come here immediately. How these children torture me, they are veritable young serpents."

"Belleville! the Belleville bus."

"Belleville, why that's ours. Adelaide, take the little one by the hand."

"Yes, that's easy to do when one has a basket and a box already."

But hardly had the stout lady left the office with her maid and the two children than the bus for Belleville started; there had only been one place empty in it and twenty people were waiting for it. Disappointment was depicted on all faces; some people, tired of waiting, decided to start on foot. The others waited on the Place, the greater number went back into the office where the benches were all full.

Is there a better invention than public omnibuses; but we must confess that they do not come up to the more modest char-à-banc, which you have to yourself, even though you only hire it.

Unable to find a place in the inside of the office, the little boy's mamma seated herself on a bench outside. As to the maid, she found a way to place herself inside; the fish that she had in her basket enabled her to get a seat, for no one would stay near her. The gentleman of the cake came back. He ran to the clerk.

"Well, are they going to start now?"

"Where are you going, monsieur?"

"You know very well, to La Villette."

"The bus started three minutes ago."

"What! without waiting for me? I asked you if I had time to go and buy a cake. You told me yes; and you ought to have told me no."

"You need not have been so long, monsieur."

"I thought there were some pastrycooks in Saint-Martin square, but I only found pork-shops."

"You can take the other bus."

"Will it be long?"

"Seven minutes."

"Then I have time to go and drink a glass of beer to wash down my cake? The cafés are not like the pastrycooks', there are some of them everywhere."

"Take care, monsieur, seven minutes at the latest."

"You will make them wait a little if I am not here."

"They won't wait, monsieur."

Two young girls, rather pleasing in appearance, came into the office; they were modestly dressed, with hats so small and so placed on the back of the head, that they looked more like caps. Altogether, they had the appearance of grisettes.

Some writers, who observe manners and customs, seated in their study or at a café table, assert that there are no longer any grisettes; I assure you that there are still plenty of them, and if you have not seen them, it is because you have not looked for them. There will always be grisettes in Paris, where the rather fast young workwoman of the Latin Quarter does not leap immediately from her room into the boudoir of a kept woman.

One of the young girls who had come into the coach office was dark, with a turned-up nose, a saucy, mischievous eye, smiling mouth, with teeth rather too far apart, but which were at any rate better than false teeth; the other was a blonde with fair hair bordering on red, but that color has never prevented a woman from being pretty. If you doubt the truth of what I say, go to England, to Scotland, where hair like that is in the majority, and the greater part of the women there are very seductive. The fair grisette was pleasing, only she had a rather simple expression which might, at a pinch, pass for modesty, but which, on talking with her, you found was really only

stupidity; she formed a striking contrast to her companion, who looked very wide awake and bright.

"Monsieur," said the dark grisette, addressing the man in charge; "have you any places for Belleville?"

"Mademoiselle, you shall have your turn."

"But will our turn be long in coming?"

"Not very, a good many people have gone."

In fact, the odor exhaled by the whiting shut up in Mademoiselle Adelaide's basket and a fear of going in a bus with her, had made a good many people leave the office who were going to the same place.

"Here, mesdemoiselles, you had better take two tickets, your turn will come."

"Say, Laurette, suppose we were to go on foot?" said the gentle blonde.

"Thank you, to wear ourselves out and arrive in a perspiration. Pretty pleasure that would be. I don't like to perspire, for it puts my hair out of curl. Good heavens! how many people there are here; it's crowded now. No one seems to want to go on foot and there aren't enough omnibuses."

"Belleville! the Faubourg de Temple."

New evolutions, executed by the fat lady, the two little boys and the maid, but without any further success; four places were free, but there were numbers presented before theirs. The two young girls also drew near to the bus.

"There's no room, except on top," said the conductor.

"Oh, well that's all the same to us, we'll get up outside."

"Pardon me, but they don't let ladies go up outside;" and the conductor added with a mischievous look, "I'm not to blame for it, I should like nothing better myself."

"I should think so, indeed," said an individual in a blouse. "If they let women climb on top of the omnibus, there are a great many of their admirers who would pay to be the conductors."

"What makes them say such things as that?" asked the fair girl of her companion; "and what advantage would it be to the conductors if women did go up to the places at three sous?"

"Oh, how stupid you are, Lucie! Don't you understand?"

"Why, no."

"Ha! ha! you make me sorry for you."

"Well, why don't you tell me why?"

"My dearest dear, it's all a matter of a point of view, and nothing else."

A young booby came into the office, saying,—

"Monsieur, for the Place Cadet."

"It isn't here; the office is on the boulevard, down there to the left, standing back from the street."

"Infinitely obliged; but will they have a place for me?"

"How do you suppose we know, since it isn't here?"

"Oh, that's all right; and will they give me a number there? And if you give me one, won't that bring me back all the same?"

"Why no, monsieur, since the bus doesn't stop here."

"But then I want to go outside."

"You can go outside or inside, that doesn't matter to us."

"Can any one go inside?"

The clerk decided to turn his back on the kind of idiot who would address such questions to him. Mademoiselle Laurette, who had heard this dialogue, shrieked with laughter, saying,—

"There's one that I would have sent to live with the bears. What a stupid man! You must have a lot of patience to answer all such people."

"Oh, mademoiselle, if you were employed in a ticket office, you would often hear things as bad as that."

"Really? Are there still so many stupid people as that in Paris?"

"There are some of them everywhere, mademoiselle."

However, the individual who wanted to go to the Place Cadet left the office, then stopped on the Place, looking around him as though he did not know what to do. He saw the fat lady who

was seated on a bench with MM. Narcisse and Aristoloche, one on either side of her, of whom one was trying constantly to push back the feathers which adorned the front of his hat, while the other persistently stuck one of his fingers in his nose. Our individual approached this lady and bowed to her, saying,—

“Madame, how can I get to the Place Cadet, if you please?”

The lady answered acidly,—

“Do you take me for an omnibus clerk, monsieur? Can’t you go into the office?”

“Pardon, madame, but I have just come out of there and they told me, ‘You will find it on the left, standing back from the street.’”

“Well, monsieur, and am I standing back from the street?”

“Hang it! I don’t know; they told me to the left. I don’t see the office, and I don’t see any bus;” and the individual turned back into the office which he had just left, shouting,—

“Where is the place that they sell the tickets for the Place Cadet? I can’t find it. Can’t you come and show me the way?”

“Well, that’s the last touch, that is. If we were to show all the people who inquire of us the way to their destination, we should be obliged to have messengers attached to the establishment. I told you, monsieur, down there on the other side of the Boulevard Saint-Denis.”

"What, must I go as far as Saint-Denis to look for the Place Cadet?"

"La Villette! Here you are. Passengers for La Villette, please get inside."

The persons who were going to that destination hastened to leave the office, and in this movement they rather hustled the gentleman who wanted to go to the Place Cadet and who obstinately remained in the office where he had no business, looking at everybody as if he wanted to cry.

Mademoiselle Laurette said to him: "But why do you stay here, monsieur, as they've told you to go to the office down there on the Boulevard Saint-Denis."

"Mademoiselle, I don't know the Boulevard Saint-Denis, and I am afraid of losing myself."

"The fact is, they shouldn't have let you come out alone. Your parents are very imprudent. Do you know what you must do? Go and find one of those messengers who are standing over there against the Porte Saint-Martin: take one of them under the arm, give him ten sous and he will lead you to the Place Cadet; he will even carry you there if you are too tired to walk."

"Ten sous! oh, that's too dear. You are not going to the Place Cadet, mademoiselle, are you?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, we are going to the country."

"Oh, do the omnibuses go into the country too?"

"They go everywhere, monsieur."

"Really, and I should like to see the sea. Do the omnibuses give checks for the sea?"

"You've nothing to do but ask, and then you'll find out."

The great booby was about to approach the clerks again, but he was pushed aside by the gentleman who had gone to drink the beer and who came back into the office with a cheerful air, saying,—

"This time I hope I haven't been long. My bus for Villette, is it coming?"

"The Villette omnibus has just started, monsieur."

"Oh, that's altogether too much. Couldn't you have it wait for me a little?"

"No, monsieur, they don't wait."

"And now, when will the next one come?"

"In ten minutes or thereabouts."

"Oh, then, I have time to take a small glass of brandy and the small glass will wash down the beer."

The gentleman returned to the café, followed by the great booby, who shouted to him from a distance,—

"Monsieur, how shall I get to the Place Cadet?"

A file of carriages, coachmen with white gloves, semi-bourgeois equipages, had stopped on the Place before the door of the restaurant; it was another wedding that they were going to celebrate at Deffieux's.

A good many people had gathered in front of the restaurant door to see the new married people enter; curious people abound in Paris; perhaps it is more correct to say that they abound everywhere. Why is the desire to see a bride before she has entered on the duties of her married life so general? Is it simply to see whether she is pretty and to guess from her features whether she welcomes the prospect of being a wife with joy? This is a simple question that we put, but we cannot charge ourselves with answering it.

Among all the persons who had stopped there, some in going in, others in coming out of the omnibus ticket office and others in merely passing by, was a tall gentleman nearing forty-five, who held himself very upright, carried his head high and his nose in the air, and wore his hat on one side; altogether like a jolly, roystering blade.

This individual, whose chestnut hair was beginning to be sprinkled with gray, had rather irregular features. His eyes were small, deep-set, of a pale green, but filled with animation and vivacity. His nose was broad, slightly turned-up and might have passed for a pug nose. His mouth was large, but his teeth were handsome and there were none of them missing; and his smile was rather agreeable, the more so as he was not lavish with it. His chin was rather retreating but, on the other hand, his cheek bones were rather prominent. His face was red and blotched

and pimpled, but, as well as his body, it was thin, and although exceedingly plain in his general appearance, this gentleman looked as if he thought himself an Apollo. He wore big, thick mutton-chop whiskers which almost joined under the middle of his chin, leaving between them only a small parting perfectly shaved, which he often affectionately caressed, calling it his dimple. This person's manners showed as much assurance as acquaintance with the world, they would even yet have smacked of good society had he not swaggered a little in walking, which gave him somewhat the appearance of a drum-major; but instead of a thick cane, this gentleman had only a thin walking-stick with a hooked handle which seemed to have been painted and gilded formerly, but which had lost a great part of its adornment. It was a very supple stick with which he frequently struck his trousers.

This individual's dress did not indicate a dandy although the one who wore it affected the manners of one. His woollen trousers, with great squares, seemed to have been cut out of the plaid of a portière. His waistcoat, in squares also, presented colors which did not match with those of the trousers. This gentleman only lacked a plaid to look altogether like a Scotchman; but instead of the plaid, he wore a wide nut-colored overcoat, which he often left open in order that his slender figure might be seen and in which he sometimes

hermetically enveloped himself as if it were a mantle; needless to say, his costume was completely lacking in freshness.

In order that everybody might hear what he said, and probably be overcome by his wit, a way of attracting attention which makes one understand immediately with whom one has to do, this gentleman pushed and hustled some loiterers, exclaiming,—

“What is going on here? What is it? A wedding? Why, by Jove! is it so curious a thing to see a wedding that everybody stops here, pushing and pressing to see the married couple? These idling Parisians! really one would believe that they had never seen anything.”

“Well, and why are you hustling me, if it is not curious to look at?” said a young street arab in a blouse, whom this gentleman had pushed rather rudely.

“Who is this who dares to address me? I believe, God forgive me, that this little cook’s boy is speaking. Take care, or I’ll teach you with whom you have to do.”

“In the first place I’m not a cook’s boy, do you understand, you big longshanks?”

The epithet “big longshanks” made the gentleman with the Scotch underpinnings jump. He threw himself back, raising his cane, and in this movement trod on the toes of an old woman who was behind him, holding in a leash a little dog

who was doing his best to prevent the arrival of the carriages of the wedding.

"Oh, monsieur, take care; you're stepping on me. A little more and you would have crushed Abdallah."

"Very sorry, madame, but I have no eyes in my back. Ah, he's fled, the rascal who dared to answer me, I shall not pursue him, because he is but a child. If he were a man, he would have already received my cane on his shoulders."

"Monsieur, take care! Abdallah is between your feet."

"And who is Abdallah, madame?"

"My pretty spaniel. Come, come along here, you rover."

"That a spaniel; that's a very ugly mongrel, for which I would not give two sous. Some people are so stupid about their dogs. Ah! this, no doubt, is the bride. Hang it! how lightly she jumps to the ground. Very good! I have my opinion; she will wear the breeches, I see that at the first glance."

A young woman in the traditional costume of a bride had, in fact, alighted from one of the carriages. She had not awaited the arm which a fat papa was about to offer her; the latter, breathing heavily and already in a perspiration, could not, however, be one of the groomsmen. The bride appeared to be twenty years of age. She was small and plump, with fair hair and a rose-leaf

complexion. She was not a beauty, but she had a very engaging, saucy face, and an agreeable smile which indicated wit; but then smiles do not always bear out all they promise. The stout papa, who had presented his arm too late to help the bride alight from the carriage, was too late again when another lady was about to get down, and he equally missed the third because he was very much occupied in wiping away with his handkerchief, the perspiration which rolled down his forehead.

The gentleman with the plaid understandings then glanced at this person and cried, advancing so as to get nearer to the wedding party,—

“Confound it! if I am not mistaken, this is my honest Blanquette. That dear M. Blanquette! Oh come now, Father Blanquette, come now! what’s the matter that you no longer recognize your friends? Look over this way a bit.”

The stout papa, addressed in such a lively fashion, ceased to wipe his forehead and raising his eyes on the crowd, presently perceived the individual who had spoken to him. Then a feeling that was rather vexation than pleasure showed in his physiognomy; he responded to this gentleman’s greeting with cold politeness and constraint.

“Oh, M. Cherami, how do you do?”

“You are of the wedding party, Papa Blanquette, are you not? You are got up in great style. You were in the same carriage as the bride.”

"Why, it would be rather singular if I were not at the wedding, since it is my nephew's."

"It is your nephew who is married? Oh, then I understand. I know where I am now. What, that dear little Adolphe who never wanted to do anything, who never took to anything, so far as I can remember."

"Why, he has taken very well to marriage; besides, Adolphe is now a big fellow."

"What, it is your nephew's wedding you are celebrating? And I did not know it? I, an old friend? for you know, Papa Blanquette, how devoted I am to you and you have seen me occasionally and you didn't let me know about it? I am not invited to the wedding. Are you aware, M. Blanquette, that I should have the right to be shocked at this proceeding if I were at all susceptible? But I am not, I leave that to idiots."

For some moments, the stout gentleman barely listened to the person whose name we now know. The bridegroom's uncle watched the carriages driving up, and another having replaced that from which the bride had alighted, he did not wish this time to be too late to give his arm to the ladies. He ran towards the door, leaving M. Cherami in the midst of his talk and confined himself to bowing and murmuring,—

"Excuse me, monsieur, but I have no time; here are some ladies to whom I must offer my hand. I cannot talk any further."

Monsieur Cherami compressed his lips, lifted his brows, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, that's your politeness, is it, you old fogy? He doesn't know how to contain himself because he's made money by selling cloth and he thinks that's something very surprising, and here I've sent him fifty customers, among others, my tailor. He looked as if he hardly recognized me and all that because he has a little money. A great deal to be proud of! Who doesn't have money now? It has become so common that distinguished people no longer wish for it."

"I should think he must be very distinguished then, this big dried-up fellow," whispered Made-moiselle Laurette to her friend; the two young girls had also come to see the wedding party, and they were near enough to M. Cherami to hear what he said.

However, the four wedding carriages had got rid of their passengers, who had gone into the restaurant; then the carriages drove off and the curious crowd dispersed, except those persons who had business at the omnibus office.

CHAPTER II

THE CAPUCINE FAMILY. MONSIEUR CHERAMI

WITH his eyes fixed upon the entrance door of the restaurant and striking his trousers nervously with his cane, M. Cherami remained on the Place; he acted as though very undecided as to what he wished to do and muttered, but always in such a fashion that he could be heard by those about him,—

“I don’t know what keeps me here; I should like to go and take my part at this wedding. I have a perfect right to thrust myself into this clique, and if I were properly dressed I should certainly not fail to do so. Upon my word of honor, I will do it; not that I care anything about a wedding repast, I know what a feast is. Thank God! I have been to several in my life which this one is not likely to approach by a very long shot. Confound it! what is it that’s pulling and squeezing my legs like that?”

“Monsieur, I beg of you, don’t stir,” exclaimed a falsetto feminine voice, “don’t make a movement. My poor Abdallah’s string has got twisted in your legs; I am going to unwind it and release him.”

"Confound it, madame, you have a very troublesome animal. When anyone is holding a dog in leash they should not let out so much string."

The old lady, having managed to unwind her spaniel from the gentleman's legs, decided to take Abdallah under her arm, and departed with him, casting furious looks on everybody.

But M. Cherami, having got rid of the dog, turned round and saw the fat lady and the two little boys who were still waiting for places to go to Belleville. He uttered new exclamations and almost overturned himself bowing, shouting in such a way as to make everybody who was there turn round,—

"Why, God forgive me! is this Madame Capucine I see? What a fortunate meeting. I didn't expect such happiness as this. What, and you were here, my dear lady, and I did not see you until this moment?"

"Yes, M. Cherami, I am here and have been for long enough, alas! I assure you that I am growing very impatient. The idea of having to wait for an hour to get places in an omnibus."

"Don't mention it, it's unbearable. That is why I always go on foot. I cannot make up my mind to wait. And here are these two fine fellows, Narcisse and Aristoloche; they are an ornament to your household. They will be very fine boys; they are exactly like their mother."

A smile in which there was an assumption of modesty, settled on Madame Capucine's lips as she answered mincingly,—

"Oh, but they look a little like their father, too."

"Do you think so? No, I can't see it. Capucine isn't good-looking, a very insignificant face; while his wife—ah, the rascal knew how to choose. But I don't understand however you could have decided to marry him. Had I been a woman, I could never have done it. You are Venus and Vulcan."

"Oh, M. Cherami, you exaggerate so. Anybody, to hear you, would think that my husband was a hunchback."

"If he isn't, he ought to be."

"Why, what do you mean by that?"

"Hush, I know what I mean. Ah! if Capucine were not my friend."

"Adelaide! Adelaide! I think this is the green omnibus coming now; come out here."

The cook left the office and came up to them with her basket. M. Cherami greeted her amiably, but she hardly answered him and muttered,—

"Good, there go the rest of our crowns. Is he going to come with us, I wonder? Then we shall never have enough provisions."

"Are you going into the country, Madame Capucine?"

"Yes, monsieur, we are going to Romainville."

"You have bought a pleasure house, a country villa, in those parts?"

"No, monsieur; but my aunt Duponceau possesses a little estate there, and we are going to pass to-morrow with her."

"And you are going to begin this evening, according to what I see?"

"She made me promise to come on Saturday with my children; Capucine will join us to-morrow."

"Ah! he's not with you then?"

"That was impossible, we could not all leave because of our business. It's a great deal for me to come with my maid."

"But you have your clerk? M. Ballot?"

"Oh yes, he's still with us, we are very fortunate to have him. He's a very intelligent fellow, full of ideas."

Monsieur Cherami smiled maliciously as he answered,—

"Yes, yes, I saw immediately that he attended to your business very well. I am sure that you will push that young man."

"Oh, he's very well able to push himself. He will come to join us to-morrow at Romainville with my husband."

"It will be a complete party then, but in the mean time you are without a squire to give you his arm and watch over you."

"There are no dangers to run on this road."

"A beautiful woman is always running into danger. All the men want to abduct her. They don't always yield to this desire, but I guarantee you that they have it. Oh, hang it! a charming idea comes to me; suppose I should accompany you to Romainville? Your aunt Duponceau will certainly be not displeased to see me; I think she even invited me one day to go and visit her at her country house."

"Yes, she must have invited you."

"What do you think of the idea, fair lady?"

Madame Capucine, who had attentively examined the gentleman's get-up, seemed hardly to care to take with her to the country a cavalier whose dress did him no honor; so, instead of answering his question, she exclaimed,—

"By the way, M. Cherami, my husband bade me, whenever I should happen to meet you, remind you of that little account—you know? It was for flannel waistcoats and has been running for a long time now. You promised to pay it; I think that it comes to a hundred and thirty francs."

Monsieur Cherami made a horrible grimace and dug his fist into his hat as he murmured,—

"Yes, madame, I am well aware that I owe a little account, a bagatelle, a mere trifle, but I have been occupied with business much more important than that."

"The account is at least three years behind."

"What if it were twenty years? It is, nevertheless, a trifle."

"Madame, madame, they are calling our numbers. There are some places."

"Oh, good heavens! well, here I am. Come Aristoloche, walk on! Good-day, M. Cherami, think of us when you can, though I don't say that to press you."

Madame Capucine, with her two little boys, ran after the maid and they all four got into the omnibus.

"There are still two places, mesdemoiselles," said the clerk, addressing the two grisettes who had also numbers for Belleville, but Mademoiselle Laurette answered, making a negative sign of the head,—

"Thank you, we will yield our turn and wait for the next one; I don't travel with fish. In a boat it might pass, but in a bus it smells a little too strong."

As to M. Cherami, he hardly answered Madame Capucine's good-day, but watched her departure with an expression of disdain, saying,—

"She's as common as she can be, this hosier's wife; to speak to me of the balance of an account in the street in broad daylight, when I had had the kindness to pay her compliments and tell her that her two little maggots of children were pretty. Get along and sell your cotton nightcaps, you Hottentot Venus. A fine drug her flannel waist-

coats were, I've only worn them for three years and they are all to pieces already. I understand very well why you don't care for me to go to your Aunt Duponceau's; that might interfere with your little tête-à-tête with your clerk Ballot. Oh, poor Capucine! When I told this enormous woman that her husband ought to have been a hunchback, she understood very well what I meant by that; but, for all that, I should like very much to know where I am going to dine to-day. And even, to express myself more frankly, for I may as well be frank with myself, I should like to know if I shall dine at all to-day."

Is there a sadder thing than to have to ask one's self whether one is going to have any dinner or not? However, in Paris, there are people every day who find themselves in that condition; but there is one consoling thought, that these persons usually manage to dine: some of them very badly, in truth; others, middling well; and still others, very well indeed, as if they were still in the prime of their prosperity. Those who dine the best manage it by some stratagem, by some new effort of their imagination, which, however, ought to be worn threadbare. What I think the most surprising is that they dine cheerfully with very good appetite without making themselves uneasy about the next day. One may accustom one's self to everything, they say; if this is philosophy, I don't envy the philosophers.

It is, however, when one sinks into poverty by his own fault, by his misconduct, his irregularity, that this poverty must be the most poignant, the most cruel, the most painful to bear, and that shame must accompany it. Those who are really the victims of the injustice of fate or of the foolishness of their contemporaries, may, at least, hold up their heads without blushing for their poverty. Such were Homer, misunderstood during his life; Plato, reduced to turning a potter's wheel; Xylander, who, to obtain a morsel of bread, sold his work on Dion Cassius; Lelio Giradi, author of a curious history of the Greek and Latin poets, who was reduced to the same extremity; then again Usserius, a learned chronologist; Cornelius Agrippa, who wrote on the vanity of science and the excellence of women; or the celebrated Michael Cervantes to whom we owe the inimitable romance of *Don Quixote*.

Let us add to this list Paul Borghese, who died of hunger; Tasso, who lived for a week on a crown which somebody had lent him, he, however, became well off, but it was only in the evening of his life; Alde Manuce, who was so poor that he rendered himself insolvent by borrowing only what would suffice for the transportation of his library from Venice to Rome, where he was summoned; Cardinal Bentivoglio, to whom we owe the history of the civil war in Flanders, did not leave enough to bury him; Baudoin, translator

of nearly all the Latin authors; Vauglas, the grammarian; Du Ryer, tragic author and translator of the Koran; all lived in indigence. But we must stop; examples are not lacking—they would lead us too far. They are not cheerful and would lead us out of our way.

It was M. Cherami's position which led us to make them, let us therefore return to that gentleman.

This personage, whom we now see so meanly dressed and not knowing whether he should get any dinner, had been in a very different position. He had been quoted for his dress, his deportment and his love adventures. His father who had shone in the consular magistracy, had but this one child, Arthur (such was M. Cherami's pre-nomen), had been cherished, pampered, spoilt, praised and they had flattered themselves that he would make a great man. Poor parents! who think that they can make of their child an illustrious man as one makes a tailor or a shoemaker. Arthur became great, but in figure only. They sent him to college, wishing to give him a brilliant education; young Cherami learnt well enough, he had intelligence and facility. He became very strong in the pleasurable arts, fencing, horsemanship, gymnastics, but he had the greatest aversion to all kinds of serious occupations and when his parents said to him,—

“Will you be a lawyer, doctor, literary man,

stockbroker or general?" Arthur answered: "I would much rather walk about on the boulevards smoking a big eight-sou cigar." This answer, frank in the extreme, indicated the happiest disposition to spend a fortune which his parents had so laboriously amassed and saved and which they left soon after to their well-beloved son. At twenty-two years of age, Arthur, who had still done nothing but walk about and smoke, found himself an orphan and the master of thirty-five thousand francs income.

Then he abandoned himself to his taste for pleasure, augmented by a very lively leaning towards the fair sex, and the fair sex is never ungrateful towards a man who is rich and generous. Arthur was not handsome, his nose was crooked, his eyes small and his chin receding; however, the women told him, and repeatedly, that he was charming, adorable, irresistible—and he believed it.

We believe so easily what flatters our self-conceit! Arthur was not an idiot; he even had some mind, but he was totally lacking in good sense; and without good sense, mind usually serves only to make us act foolishly. Larochefoucauld has put that in his chapter on women; as for me, I think it applies perfectly to both sexes. At thirty years, the dandy Cherami had devoured, spent, squandered, all his inheritance; but he had been quoted for his costumes, his horses, his

conquests, his success with the ladies. Eight years in consuming a principal which afforded thirty-five thousand francs income was not going so fast after all. We often see young men who, in much less time, get rid of three times as much. True it is, Arthur did not gamble at the Exchange.

Obliged, then, to sell his furniture, his horses, his silverware, Cherami lived still for some time on these resources, but his friends had already begun to think him less witty, less amiable, and the women no longer called him Handsome Arthur. This was because he could no longer give rich presents to these ladies and that, instead of lending money to his friends or paying for them at some orgy, he now asked them to pay for him and often borrowed money of them. At thirty-five years, Cherami was what his good friends called entirely wilted; otherwise, ruined. After living for some time on his credit, he had ceased to be able to obtain it from his tailor, his shirt-maker, his bootmaker, and had thus been compelled to wear faded clothing, then worn clothing and then threadbare; hats which from black had become reddish; boots worn down at the heels and rarely blacked. In this costume when Cherami would say to some one of his old acquaintances,—“I have forgotten my purse; lend me twenty francs, will you?” the acquaintance would make a grimace and instead of twenty francs

would lend only a hundred sous, and sometimes would lend nothing at all; for a man in a seedy coat does not inspire confidence. One should never lend except to the rich, because there is some chance that they may return it.

After some time, the so-called "handsome Arthur" found himself deprived of this last resource. He had so often said to his old friends, "I have forgotten my purse," or "I've discovered that I have a hole in my pocket," that the latter got out of his way as soon as they saw him at a distance. Many even ceased to return his bow and made as though they did not recognize him. Misfortunes are the breakers of friendship.

However, from his brilliant fortune, there still remained something to Cherami; very little, it is true, but enough to prevent his dying of hunger, and fate had so fixed it that Arthur could not dispose of this slight remains of his wealth; but for which, no doubt, he would have spent it like the rest. Our spendthrift's father, had, a short time before his death, laid one of his servants under an obligation by lending him eleven thousand francs to establish himself as a coal dealer, and, as the only condition of this loan, the negotiant, well knowing the honesty of the one he obliged, had said to him,—

"You will pay my son the interest of this sum at the rate of five per cent per annum, that will be five hundred and fifty francs that you will pay

him so long as that does not put you out; and only during a period of ten years, after which you will be acquitted of the debt; but it is quite understood that I forbid you ever to pay the capital."

No written agreement had cemented these conditions, the negotiant not wishing to receive any acknowledgment from his debtor, but the latter had faithfully fulfilled the intentions of his old master. Every three months, he carried to Arthur a hundred and thirty-seven francs, fifty centimes, the legal interest of the money which he had received. In the days of his prosperity and when he still had twenty-five thousand francs income, young Arthur had often said to Bernardin, that was the coal merchant's name,—
"What the devil do you think I can do with these hundred and thirty-seven francs, Bernardin? As if I cared for such a trifle. Go and get yourself a good fish stew at the "Râpée" with some pretty little girl. That'll be much better worth your while and I'll hold you acquitted." But the coal dealer, an honest, economical man, religiously prompt in his business affairs, contented himself with answering the young man,—

"Monsieur, I owe you this money; it is the interest of the sum that monsieur your father very willingly gave me; I say gave, for my late respected master did not wish that I should even pay any interest."

"I know all that, Bernardin, I know all that;

but you know very well that I don't ask it either, this interest. You can keep it, buy some bonbons with it for the children."

"My children have all that is necessary, monsieur, and I believe in fulfilling my engagements."

"There is no real engagement, since I have not the slightest acknowledgment from you."

"Between honest men there is no need of any acknowledgment, monsieur. I offered one to your father and he positively refused it. At the same time he forbade me ever to give you the capital of which I pay you the interest."

"And you are only to pay this interest for ten years, I am aware."

"Oh, as to that, monsieur, I did not make any reply to monsieur when he added this condition, but I shall do my duty," and the honest coal merchant departed, leaving before young Arthur the small sum which he had brought.

When the thirty-five thousand francs income was dissipated and Arthur was reduced to his last resources, he received the hundred and thirty-seven francs, fifty centimes, which Bernardin never failed to bring to him on the first of each month, with less disdain and it paid for his lodging.

One day, Cherami, having no more furniture, jewels or horses to sell, was in a furnished lodging when Bernardin brought him the money. The faithful coal dealer was well aware of the conduct of his former master's son. He had seen the

young man foolishly dissipate that fortune which his parents had been at so much trouble to amass, sell the house that they had left him, then pass from a brilliant hotel into a more modest apartment and from there to a furnished lodging house. Bernardin had never allowed himself to make the slightest reflection, the smallest observation on the change of position; only at each new step down hill taken by the young man he sighed deeply and said to himself,—

“My poor master, it is very fortunate that you are not here to see the misconduct of your son.”

But on this day, Arthur, who had not a sou, greeted the arrival of the little income with joy, and as Bernardin was going to leave him, after counting the money, he detained him, saying,—

“Listen, my dear Bernardin, I have a proposition to make you.”

“I am listening to you, monsieur.”

“You bring me very regularly the interest of the eleven thousand francs that you received from my father. However, you have the right to leave off paying me if you wish, for the ten years have already rolled by and—”

“Monsieur, I thought I had told you that I should still pay you, that I should not think myself acquitted of the debt otherwise.”

“That’s all very well; I’m sure I can’t blame you for such strict honesty, but I am going to offer you the means of acquitting yourself.

Give me a thousand crowns, three thousand francs all told, which will oblige me—because with three thousand francs one may do something, while one can't do anything with a hundred and thirty-seven francs—give me this sum, then, and I will hold you acquitted of everything and you will have no further income to pay me. Is it settled?"

"No, monsieur, that cannot be."

"And why not, since it suits me to have it so?"

"It does not suit me to pay an income of five hundred and fifty francs by giving a thousand crowns, that would be usury."

"What are you talking to me about with your usury? If you settle it thus, do you suppose I shall ask anything further of you?"

"No, monsieur, but I ought not to accept such a proposition."

"Oh, well, then, give me the eleven thousand francs which you have received, since you are so scrupulous. If you do that your conscience will be perfectly at rest and we shall both be satisfied."

"No, monsieur, I will not give you back the capital because you see—because your father at the time expressly forbade me to do so. It was the first condition he imposed on lending me the money, and who knows if he did not then see into the future, if he did not foresee that one day this modest income would be a last resource for his son."

"Bernardin, you permit yourself a lib—"

"Pardon, monsieur, I do not permit myself any such thing; but you must be quite aware, monsieur, that I fully understand your position."

"My position? Why, by Jove! it's that of all young men who have lived well, who have been fond of pleasure, who have been adored by women."

"Yes, monsieur, but you have perhaps been too good, too generous to them."

"I did just as it pleased me, and if I could begin over again I should do just the same."

"I don't doubt it, monsieur; besides, you had the right to dispose of your property as you liked."

"Yes, certainly I had. Look here, Bernardin, give me the eleven thousand francs."

"No, monsieur, because from on high your father would blame me."

"Then give me a thousand crowns."

"Nor that, either; but I will still pay the income to you, monsieur; and if I were to die to-morrow, my children would continue to pay it. Oh, that is a sacred thing and monsieur may count upon me for it."

"Well, then, look here, pay me three years in advance, six hundred and fifty francs. Ah! you can't refuse me that."

"Excuse me, monsieur, I do refuse, and that in your interest, for you would have the three years' income spent in three months and then even this frail resource would be lacking to you."

"Monsieur Bernardin, will you not advance me anything?"

"I must not, monsieur."

"Well then, be off; I've got all I want of you."

Bernardin very respectfully bowed to his deceased master's son and departed.

Some time after, when he had fallen into a most precarious state, Arthur Cherami again assailed Bernardin with pressing solicitations for an advance on his income or a part of the capital, but all his prayers had been in vain. The old servant remained inflexible in his resolution, the more so as he knew well what it meant that he should ensure a modest resource to his benefactor's son. The years passed on. Far from becoming wiser in the school of poverty, Arthur, the former dandy, had kept the same passions, the same faults and the same impertinence as in the days of his prosperity. No doubt, forty-six francs a month is a very small thing and yields a mere trifle of thirty sous a day and when it is necessary upon that for a man to lodge himself, dress himself and feed himself, he must live on very meagre fare. But for all that in Paris, where it is asserted that life is so costly, there are beneficent establishments where they sell bouillon and beef all cooked; more than this, there are places where they carry out the happy idea of serving the meals in their own establishment, where a man may dine for seven sous. Thus: two sous for bouillon,

three sous for beef and two sous for bread, and the man who does so will have taken more healthful and comfortable nourishment than the one who, for thirty-two sous, gets soup, a choice of three dishes, dessert, as much bread as he wants and half a bottle of wine.

But when Cherami received his trifling income, instead of sparing this little sum, his last resource, to pay some of his debts, and going to dine at a very low price at one of these bouillon places, he would go to one of the best restaurants in Paris, with his head in the air and an elegant manner, spread himself out before a table, call the waiter and order a fine dinner composed of the choicest dishes and the most generous wines and order it all in such a manner that everyone who was dining there could hear him. In fact, he resumed his rôle of a lion, forgetting that he no longer wore the dress of one, and still imposing on the multitude by his air of being a great nobleman. Some of them would say,—“This is an original whose poor clothes are an affectation to hide that he is a millionaire,” others, “This is some stranger, some great personage who wants to keep himself incognito in Paris.” And the waiters served promptly and with extreme politeness, this gentleman in a seedy coat who ate partridges stuffed with truffles, and drank champagne frappé; and on paying his bill, Cherami never accepted the money which the waiter brought him in change whether it was two

or three francs. He would shout to him,—“That’s all right, keep it. That’s for yourself.” Then the waiter would bow down to the ground before this very generous gentleman, the latter would proudly leave the dining-room, delighted at the effect he had produced and the next day would not have the wherewithal to dine. Lest you should think that this personage is imaginary, that there was never a man foolish enough to conduct himself thus, let us say that there are many of them; for our part, we have known more than one.

But when nothing of his modest income remained, then he again had recourse to borrowing and tricks; he was obliged to content himself with the very meagre fare for which the mistress of a low cook-shop would give him credit, because he flattered her, comparing her to a Venus, although she had cross eyes and a purple nose. In this eating-house one could not ask for champagne and truffles, it would indeed have been loss of time to do so; but Cherami still found a way of making trouble there; he shouted louder than every one else, stunned every one by his chattering, for he ever had some adventure to relate of which he was himself the hero, and in which he had accomplished many marvellous things. If one of his auditors appeared to doubt the truth of his narrative, he would provoke, insult, threaten and even absolutely wish to immediately fight a duel

with the luckless individual and to reestablish peace and calm the gentleman, it was necessary that at the very least he should be regaled with half a cup of coffee accompanied by a small complement of liqueur. As to the waiters, as he had nothing to give them, he treated them like dogs and lifted his cane to them when they did not serve him promptly enough.

If, instead of passing his time in idling and fuming, M. Cherami had been willing to do something, he would have increased his income and might have lived without being incessantly obliged to borrow. He had been sufficiently well educated and still remembered a slight smattering of many things; he knew enough and might have passed for learned in the eyes of those who were not. His writing was good enough for him to have set up for a copyist. In his youth he had studied music and played the violin a little; he might still have profited by this talent and found a modest place in the orchestra of a theatre of the second order, or better still, furnished music in a tea garden for grisettes and workmen to dance to.

But the dandified Arthur regarded all work proposed to him as beneath him; he would have thought himself degraded in following the occupation of a copyist or a fiddler, but he was not ashamed to borrow a hundred sous, when he knew very well he was unable to return them. How

do such men as these understand honor? Let us admit rather that they make it to suit themselves, as there are painters whose works have nothing in them of the natural, but who are said to be of the conventional natural school.

One day being at the end of his means, having been refused by all those from whom he had tried to borrow, and being afraid to go to the eating-house because its mistress was away, Cherami found himself under the dire necessity of going entirely without dinner, when the idea came to him to go and see the one who paid him his income; on his way to the coal merchant's house, he said to himself as he walked along,—

“Bernardin will never make the slightest advance; but confound it, if I tell him that I have not the wherewithal to buy a dinner, he surely will not let me die of hunger.”

The modest dealer was about to sit down to table with his family, when Cherami presented himself, exclaiming,—

“Devil take it! it seems you are just going to dine. You are very fortunate. As for me, I have not what will buy a dinner. Bernardin, lend me a crown that I may get some food also.”

The coal merchant answered in a respectful tone,—

“I never have money to lend, but if monsieur will do us the honor to sit down at our table, we shall be happy to offer him some of our modest dinner.”

“Oh, that is the way, is it? Well, so be it,” answered Cherami, immediately placing himself at the table.”

But at Bernardin’s the dinner was very simple; it was composed of soup, beef and a dish of potatoes. As for the wine, it was Argenteuil and very new.

Cherami exclaimed that the broth was thin, the beef hard, and the wine very bad; the dessert was composed merely of a morsel of Gerome cheese, which he asserted was only good enough for masons, and he was very much astonished that they did not take any coffee after the meal. Finally he left the table in a very bad humor, saying to Bernardin and his wife,—

“My children, you feed yourselves very badly. You live like curmudgeons. I shall not come to dinner with you again.”

This was the only thanks he rendered his host.

Arthur Cherami therefore found himself, upon this day, in a most perplexing situation, which was further augmented by an aggravating circumstance, and this was, that he had not dined the evening before. There was nothing for him, therefore, but to go to Bernardin’s, and there he was quite certain that if they would not give him any money, they would give him a dinner. But you know that our former man about town had been very ill-satisfied with the meal which he had once taken at the coal merchant’s. Not only had he thought everything uneatable, for this

gentleman in his poverty remained very hard to please; but, what was more, he had seen that it was impossible for him to try to humbug them, that is to say, to put them out of countenance, to lie, and to try to pose. The coal merchant's family did not even smile at the extraordinary stories he told, and it was that, perhaps, more than the dinner, which had rubbed Cherami the wrong way.

At the low eating-house where he was forced sometimes to go, he contented himself with a miserable dish, ill-prepared, because, while eating, he could shout and perorate and make himself heard by the greater part of the customers of the place. We know how he made those who dared to disbelieve everything in a café, pay for him.

Arthur had no business at the omnibus ticket office, but he knew in these places one frequently ran against some person of one's acquaintance. In this continual movement of people who were coming and going, starting and arriving, it is not rare to see someone whom one has not seen for a long time, and whom one has even believed to be no longer in Paris. Arthur, who had nothing to do, very often went to a railway station, walking up and down in front of the ticket offices, as if he were expecting someone, and in fact, he always expected that chance would bring the one person of his acquaintance from whom he could borrow a hundred sous, or else he would go and station

himself in front of an omnibus ticket office, still in the same hope. This time he had really met some acquaintances, but the result had not answered his expectations. Ill received by Papa Blanquette, repulsed with loss by Madame Capucine, he began to think he would have his pains for his trouble, and he said to himself,—

“Confound it! what a time we live in! The world is becoming incapable of cultivation. Politeness, urbanity, good manners are fled. Formerly when I met a friend my first words were, ‘You will have dinner with me?’ He accepted or he did not accept, but the offer was made. To-day I meet only curmudgeons who carefully refrain from offering me the slightest thing. A good many even dare to pass straight by me, and pretend that they do not know me. There are some who push their insolence so far as to dare to ask me for some miserable hundred-sou pieces, that they have lent me and that I have not returned. By Jove, I lent a good many of them myself formerly, and I never asked for them back, because I knew very well it would be useless to do so. Between friends should anyone ask for the return of money lent? Should not what belongs to one belong to the other also? That is how I understand friendship, that real, that beautiful friendship practised by Castor and Pollux, Damon and Pythias, Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades. Do we see any-

where in the Iliad that Patroclus ever said to Achilles, 'I lent you a hundred sous—or twenty francs, give them back to me!' Out upon it, you won't find such a thing. There is not the slightest example of it, and I defy all my old companions in pleasure to cite a single one to me. For all that I felt yesterday that my need of a dinner was urgent. I could not go to my little inn of the Rue Basse-du-Temple. The mistress of the place was indisposed, her husband had replaced her at the desk, and the latter is always ill-disposed towards me. He even dares to ask me for money. Low eating-house keeper! if I only had the money that I have spent at his place. Now there's Bernardin, indeed; there I am sure of finding a dinner, but such people bore me dreadfully, and then to dine with one of my father's old servants humiliates, wounds my self-respect. Confound it! am I going like Titus to lose my day?"

And as he struck his trousers with his switch, Cherami glanced around him, and then noticed the two young girls who were awaiting other places for Belleville.

"Here are two saucy little grisettes who rather please me," said he, throwing himself back on his left hip, "'a brunette and a blonde with a skin like a peach,' as we used to say formerly at the club. They are both comical little things. The fair one looks simple, but the dark one has some

wit in her saucy eyes. If I were to try to make a conquest of them by proposing a private dinner to them, I wager that they would accept. I know the sex. These young girls are so greedy. Yes, but later on they would have to pay for the dinner. That might embarrass them, and I don't like to put women in a tight place; however, it would be only doing to them as they have done formerly to me."

While making these reflections Cherami had approached the two young girls. He placed himself in front of them, humming a tune from an opera, and darted a glance at them which he made as seductive as he possibly could. The damsels looked at each other, and burst into a fit of laughter; Mademoiselle Laurette even dared to say in a mocking tone,—

"It must be that one of the Opera house chimneys has an escapement this way. Still it is rather better than an escape of gas."

"Ha! ha! how witty and satirical we are!" said Cherami, addressing himself to Mademoiselle Laurette; "I had divined that already, only from looking at your saucy little face."

"Why, monsieur, I don't know what you mean?"

"I was answering a reflection that you made on the subject of a roulade which I permitted myself to try and which was not, perhaps, correctly trilled."



Cherami . . . approached the two young girls.

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"Ah, monsieur, I did not even know that you had hummed. I was saying to my friend Lucie that we should get to the restaurant of the Saint-Fargeau park, and that I did not know whether they were having any dancing there on Sunday."

"Ah, you are going to the Saint-Fargeau park. That's just above Belleville, I think."

"Yes, monsieur."

"And there is now there a restaurant where they have dancing? Excuse me, but I am asking you for information, being very fond of places where people may dine well and amuse themselves, and I have not been that way for a long time."

"Then you will find a change there. Yes, monsieur, there is now a restaurant in the Saint-Fargeau park, which has a large garden in which there is a piece of water. But it is not one of those ridiculous basins of water, one can boat on it. It is big and there is an island which one has to be very careful in going round, for the piece of water is deep."

"One can get walnuts there," said Mademoiselle Lucie.

"Oh, people have the right to go nutting there?"

"Mercy, yes, if they fall into the water."

"That is correct. There is also a dancing pavilion?"

"Yes, monsieur, a pavilion in the open air but roofed, in case it should rain."

"Come, I see that nothing is lacking, at least if the cooking is good."

"Very good. One gets excellent fish stews there, because they catch the fish in the same neighborhood."

"Really, I shall often go to this country restaurant; I would even have gone there to-day—fortunate, mesdemoiselles, in taking the trip with you—if I were not expecting some one here—who is not coming, I begin to think. It is diabolical. They are waiting dinner for us at the Palais-Royal. It is getting near five o'clock; he will cause me to miss the appointment, and they will dine without us."

"You can dine elsewhere, that's all. Restaurants are not lacking in Paris."

"Thank God, who knows that better than I, and as there are only too many to choose from, I hope you young ladies will do me the honor of accepting a little dinner in this neighborhood."

"Thank you, monsieur, we do not accept dinners like that, besides, they are expecting us at the Saint-Fargeau park."

"That was really why I invited them," said Cherami to himself. Then he answered, "You young ladies are in business?"

"Yes, monsieur, we are feather makers. We work in one of the best shops in the Rue Saint-Denis, but to-day it is our employer's birthday, and that is why we have our day to ourselves."

"Delighted to have made your acquaintance. So you work in feathers? A delightful trade for a woman, they are so light of touch in gathering them up and putting them together."

"Is he saying something foolish to us, this gentleman?" murmured Lucie in her companion's ear.

"Why no, you silly girl, it's a compliment on the contrary."

"Belleville, passengers for Belleville."

"Laurette, here is the Belleville bus, and they are making a sign that there are places for us."

"Let us run, then. Good day, monsieur."

"Oh, you are going so quick? I was thinking that—"

The two young girls were already in the omnibus, which soon disappeared. Cherami twirled half round on his foot, and muttered,—

"They had a good face to refuse my dinner. Hang it! how should I have got out of it? However, I am not sorry to have talked with these little girls. One is called Laurette, and the other Lucie. They will be acquaintances at need. They might serve me if I ever had need of buying feathers."

CHAPTER III

ANOTHER WEDDING. THE YOUNGER SISTER. A CALCULATING YOUNG LADY

A GOOD-LOOKING young man of twenty-five years or thereabouts, of distinguished bearing, but whose dress was rather disordered, came hurriedly to this neighborhood of the Porte Saint-Martin. He walked fast, as if in desperation, and did not stop until he had reached the entrance door of the house of the Deffieux restaurant.

There the young man looked uneasily and even anxiously into the vestibule, then around him, and then up and down the boulevard. The pallor of his face, the emotion depicted on his features, and the expression of his eyes made it easy to see that he was a prey to the keenest grief—a grief which seemed to be increased by his expectation of an event that was shortly to happen. Our friend Cherami had barely perceived this young man, when the latter ran to him and said in a voice trembling with emotion,—

“Monsieur, pardon the intrusion, but will you allow me to ask if you have been here for some time past?”

“Why, yes, monsieur, for quite a long time.”

"Pardon the question then, but can you tell me—have you seen a wedding party arrive at this restaurant?"

"A wedding party? Certainly, I have seen one; it is not very long since the carriages left."

"She has arrived already? I thought that I should be here before them."

"No, you are too late."

"Have they gone in, then?"

"Yes, monsieur; I even got a very good view of the bride."

"You have seen Fanny?"

"I don't know if her name was Fanny—as to that I am ignorant; but what I do know is that she was very pleasing."

"Oh yes, monsieur, she is charming, is she not?"

"She's a pretty bride, without being a beauty."

"Oh, monsieur, there is no one in the world more beautiful than she."

"That depends on the taste; I don't want to contradict you on that point."

"Was she pale, trembling? Did she look as if she had been weeping?"

"Not in the least; she was fresh, rosy, gracious. She jumped down from the carriage laughing; then I could see that her waist was rather good, although the young person is a little chubby."

"Chubby? Why no, she is slight and small."

"And I assure you that she was rather fat; but

I don't dislike that in a blonde. Fair thin people look like feather dusters."

"Fair? Why, Fanny is dark. You are mistaken, monsieur, it was not the bride that you saw."

"It was not the bride that I saw? Oh, excuse me, monsieur, I cannot be mistaken since I talked with the bridegroom's uncle whom I know very well—Father Blanquette, a wholesale cloth merchant."

"Blanquette? Ah, excuse me, monsieur, I am mistaken. The wedding that you have seen is not the one that I am expecting."

"Well, by Jove! that isn't my fault. You asked me if a wedding had come to this restaurant and I told you that I had seen one and now you say that isn't the one you want. Explain yourself better."

"Oh, monsieur, excuse me. It is quite permissible to make a mistake. I suffer so much."

"You are suffering? The devil you are! Yes, you are very pale, and where are you suffering?"

"In the heart."

"In the heart? Why then, you must take something. Come with me into a café. I know what you want, I often have a pain in my heart."

"No, no, I won't leave this place until I have seen the perfidious, the unfaithful—"

"Oh, you are awaiting some one who has been unfaithful? That should not prevent you from

taking something to pull yourself together. You are horribly pale, you look as though you were going to faint. When you are awaiting a perfidious woman, you must summon up your strength, your courage, your nerve. Come and take some soup. There's a soup kitchen near here."

"Oh, here they are! here they are! Yes, I am sure it is her this time. I feel that it is. Look, monsieur, do you see those carriages on the boulevard?"

"Why, yes, there is another wedding. Hang it! it looks to me like a very elegant one too."

"The carriages are coming here, do you see, monsieur?"

"They're equipages, with servants in livery, it's much finer than the Blanquette wedding."

"Come, let us get nearer."

"Yes, yes, oh, be easy, I will not leave you. Will your unfaithful woman be there?"

"Fanny? She is the bride of another and I loved her so much."

"Poor fellow! I understand your sorrow now."

"I wish I could fall down dead at her feet."

"Don't be so stupid. As if it were necessary to die for a woman. Get along with you! there's nothing more easy than to replace her."

The first carriage of this other wedding stopped and four men alighted from it, all young, elegant, good form; one of the four seemed to be the hero

of the ceremony. It was he who gave the orders and sent his groomsmen towards the other carriages, pointing out to them to whom they were to offer their hands. He was rather older than the others, approaching thirty years, and he had lived, for the lines about his rather tired-looking eyes indicated an excess of work or of pleasure. He was a handsome fellow, tall, thin, with a distinguished appearance, but his big brown eyes had black circles, his mouth was small, his lips thin, his smile more ironical than cheerful, his forehead was covered with numerous wrinkles, his eyebrows often contracted when he grew animated in speaking, his fine black hair, carefully brushed, was already becoming thin and was brushed to a little point on the top of his head to prevent him from appearing bald.

"That's he! That's Auguste Monleard!" muttered the young man to whom Cherami had attached himself, tremblingly, and as he pronounced these words he pressed his companion's arm with a sort of fury; but very far from complaining of this liberty, Cherami, in his turn, pressed his arm under that of his new acquaintance, and said to him,—

"Oh, so that young man is Auguste Monleard. Wait a bit! Monleard? Monleard? I've known a Monleard. That was about twenty years ago, this can't be the same. Is he the bridegroom?"

"Yes, it was for him that she forgot me, that she repulsed me."

"She was wrong, that young man is good-looking, but you are younger; and then he looks to me like a fellow who has lived devilish fast. I don't call that a crime, only it will make it necessary for him to wear a false topknot very soon."

"I should like to go and punch his head."

The young man had already made a motion as if to dart towards the bridegroom, but Cherami restrained him, putting an arm around his body.

"What are you going to do now? Something foolish? I won't allow it. Well-bred men don't punch each other. If you want to fight a duel with the bridegroom, that's all right, I consent to that. I will even be your second, but you have plenty of time for that, and you must confess that this moment would be very ill chosen."

The poor lover no longer listened. Another carriage had stopped in front of the entrance. In this there were ladies, among others the bride, who was easily recognized by her wreath of orange-blossoms. She was a small woman, quite slender, even tiny. Her hair was as brown as her eyes, which were large, fringed by long lashes, and shaded by thin but perfectly designated eyebrows; her mouth was small and refined; she rarely allowed her teeth, which were very uneven, to be seen. She was a pleasing woman and that

was all. Any one must have been very much in love with her to have asserted that there was no one more beautiful than she in the world; but for a man who is very much struck, there is but one woman in the world and she is necessarily the most beautiful. The most remarkable thing about the bride were her feet and her hands, which were extraordinarily small and worthy of serving as models for a sculptor.

The bridegroom ran to offer his hand to his bride, to help her to alight from the carriage. The latter hardly touched the arm which he presented and, light as a feather, was instantly on the ground where she seemed much occupied in looking to see that her dress had not got ruffled in the carriage.

"Here she is! that is she, that's Fanny," muttered the young man, leaning on Cherami.

"She doesn't look to me at all as if she had been crying," resumed the latter.

"Good heavens! is she not going to look this way?"

"What would be the use of that? She would see you looking pale and overcome and ghastly. That's not the way to show yourself to a woman, in order to make her regret you."

"She will see how I suffer, she will divine that grief is killing me."

"And I answer to you for it, that that won't prevent her dancing this evening. I can read

physiognomies and I can judge that woman, a harsh temperament and a heart idem. There's not much sensibility under that exterior; at least, it would astonish me infinitely if there were."

However, some other ladies had alighted from the carriage, then some young girls who hastened to group themselves around the bride. One fastened a pin, another readjusted the folds of her veil, another refastened her bouquet, and while they attended to these little details of the toilet so important in the eyes of a woman and particularly to those who are newly married, the latter looked around her and presently her eyes fixed themselves on the pale, ghastly, suffering young man, for he had elbowed and pushed aside all the persons who came between him and the bride, and who would have prevented him from looking at her whom he had come there to see. A slight feeling of emotion was depicted on the face of the young bride. There was in her eyes an expression of compassion, and pity which did not go so far as sadness and as, almost at the same instant, her husband, who had noticed her preoccupation, came towards her attentively, she quickly changed her expression, assumed an amiable and laughing air and accepted his arm, making very pleasing little grimaces at him. Then the young man whom Cherami was holding by the arm could not master a movement of anger, and exclaimed,—

"It's frightful! Not a look of regret, of farewell for me. She sees my suffering, my despair, and she smiles at that man, goes off on his arm with happiness and joy in her eyes."

At this moment one of the young ladies who were in the same carriage as the bride quickly approached him whom this marriage had made so unhappy, and said to him, in a low voice which was full of gentleness and sympathy,—

"Why are you here, Gustave? Why did you come? You promised me to have courage."

"And I have courage, mademoiselle. You see very well that I have, since I have not overwhelmed the perfidious girl with reproaches here before her husband, her new relations."

"Oh, that would have been very ill-done on your part and how would it have helped you? I beg of you, Gustave, be reasonable. Monsieur, please do not leave him."

The last words were addressed to Cherami, who made haste to reply,—

"I leave this dear Gustave! in the state in which he now is? The idea! What do you take me for, mademoiselle? It goes without saying that I shall stick to him like ivy to the oak. If he should throw himself in the water, I would follow him there; but be easy, he won't throw himself into it. I am here to look after his safety; he has not a more devoted friend than I."

At this moment several voices called: "Adol-

phine, Adolphine, come along." The young person murmured: "They are looking for me, they are calling me. Good-bye, Gustave; but if you have the slightest friendship for me, you won't abandon yourself to grief, will you? I entreat you not to do so;" and darting off with the lightness of a gazelle, the amiable young girl soon disappeared under the portico as well as all the other persons whom the carriages had brought.

"That is a little person who pleases me very much," cried Cherami. "She is at least either the sister or the cousin of the bride. To my taste, she is prettier than the bride. She has not perhaps such large eyes, but hers are so soft, so tender, so good; and then they are blue, which always indicates more real sensibility. I have made a study of them. Her hair is not as dark as the other's, but it is of a very clear chestnut, which is very pretty too. She has not such a small mouth, but her lips are not so thin and compressed as those of the bride. One should be suspicious of thin lips, they are the sign of hypocrisy and malice. She's not so small as your perfidious Fanny, but she is taller and her figure is more stately and elegant. In fact, she's a very pretty person, is this young lady, Mademoiselle Adolphine. I say mademoiselle, for I suppose that she is still unmarried. Have I guessed correctly?"

But Gustave was no longer listening to his new

friend; with eyes fixed on the door by which the wedding party had entered, he seemed a prey to a vague hallucination. Cherami shook him by the arm, saying to him,—

“Come, now, my dear M. Gustave. I know your name now and I shall not forget it, though you must have another which you will tell me later on. What do you want to do. Everybody has gone in; there is nobody here in front of this door now but our two selves. The carriages have started or are waiting in the Rue de Bondy. You have seen that which you wished to see. I presume that it is not now your intention to remain until this wedding party breaks up. That would keep you here too long. Why, confound it! my dear fellow, for you must allow me so to call you, I deserve it for the interest that I have shown in you. You heard this charming young person, who came to speak to you with tears in her voice and her eyes! Yes, deuce take me, if she hadn’t tears in her eyes! She begged you, supplicated you to have courage, that amiable Adolphine. I have remembered her name also. Well, haven’t you got all you wanted? What the devil are you waiting for, in front of this door? All these people have gone to dinner and we must do the same—go to dinner. I say, we must go, because I promised that good Adolphine not to leave you and, God willing! I will keep my promise. They are waiting somewhere

for me to eat a turkey stuffed with truffles, but there are truffled turkeys elsewhere and that doesn't make me at all uneasy. Come, let's see; what do you want to do. You'll never win a woman by allowing yourself to fall into a state of inanition."

"I want to speak to Fanny's sister again."

"The bride's sister? Ah! I understand, that's Mademoiselle Adolphine."

"I have a great many things to ask her; just now I was so troubled I could not think; I had not time."

"You want to speak to that young lady again? Why, it seems to me that will be rather difficult. The wedding party are all gone into the house. Unless we were—and why not, in fact? It is a restaurant and although they have several weddings on hand that will not prevent them from entertaining, also, all the people who come to them for dinner. Let us go in there and dine? What do you think of it?"

"Oh, yes, yes, you're right; we will go and dine there. We will ask for a private room near the wedding party, and during the ball, or before, I can see her again, I can talk to Adolphine."

"Deuce take it! once there, we shall be at home. We can establish our batteries there and no one will have the right to send us away; we can have our supper, and breakfast to-morrow morning. So long as we are eating, they will be only too glad to have us stay."

"It's awfully good of you, monsieur, to take so much interest in me without knowing me, without knowing even who I am."

"Oh, my dear fellow, I am a physiognomist. You interested me from the very first; besides, I like to oblige. I do nothing else. Come, we'll go to dinner."

"We must ask where the Monleard wedding is, that we may have a room on the same floor."

"That is understood. Come to dinner."

"Without seeming to do so, I shall question the waiter. A five-franc piece will win him to my side."

"He'll be quite devoted to you. Come to dinner."

"I shall tell him to place us as near as possible to the place where the ladies are talking."

"But, confound it! if we tarry here there will no longer be a private room near your wedding party."

"You are right. Come along! come along!"

"At last," said Cherami to himself, following on Gustave's steps; "I have caught my hare."

The hundred sous given by young Gustave to the waiter immediately put the latter into the most obliging disposition. He established the newcomers on the first story in a private room at the end of a corridor, at the other end of which was the vast hall where the wedding feast was taking place. Gustave would have liked to be

nearer the place of festivity, but that was quite out of the question; and his companion made him understand that they were much better off at the end of the corridor where Mademoiselle Adolphe could, if she wished, come and say a few words to them without being seen by the wedding guests.

"And now for dinner!" cried Cherami, hanging his hat on a peg. "I must admit that I need some. These events, your sorrow, your despair, awaken my emotion and that is exhausting. You must also have need of some sustenance, for you are extremely pale."

"I, monsieur? I am not at all hungry."

"One is never hungry at the beginning; but later on, one manages to eat very well. Besides, we came here for dinner, I believe."

"Well, monsieur, will you have the kindness to order it? Ask for anything that you like, everything that will please you, but do not compel me to busy myself about that."

"Very well, I will do so; in fact, I think it will be much better so. With your preoccupations, your sighings, you would hardly be capable of ordering a dinner. You would order a calf instead of a fish, radishes for prawns. As for me, I excel in this kind of thing. That is because I have lived, and lived well. Waiter! some madeira first of all, and put some moët on the ice; while you are doing that, I will make out the menu."

The madeira being brought, Cherami immediately drank two glasses to tone up his stomach, then he wrote the bill of fare for the dinner, carefully ordering all that there was of the best. The waiter, who examined this gentleman's dress while he was writing, would probably have shown less attention to him had not the person who was with him begun by slipping five francs into the former's hand; but this spontaneous generosity had given another turn to the waiter's ideas, and he imagined that the gentleman with the plaid understandings was a Scotchman who had not yet doffed his travelling costume.

While Cherami made out the bill of fare, young Gustave could not remain one moment in his place. He kept running to the door, sometimes walked a little way down the passage, and then came back to question the waiter of whom his companion was ordering the dinner.

"Waiter, is the wedding party already at table?"

"They have just this moment sat down, monsieur."

"The cutlets must not be overdone, remember."

"That will be all right, monsieur."

"Where is the bride sitting?"

"At the middle of the table, monsieur."

"Liberally surrounded by truffles."

"Beside whom is she sitting?"

"I think, in the first place, beside her father, monsieur."

"And on the other side."

"A salmon trout."

"It is a lady, monsieur."

"If it is not fresh, we will not accept it."

"How is the lady's head dressed?"

"She has lilies of the valley on her head."

"What do you mean? Lilies of the valley on a salmon trout! I never saw anything like that."

"But, monsieur, it was not of a trout that I was speaking; it was of a lady at the wedding."

"A capon served with coarse salt."

"Does he look at her often?"

"Cooked to a turn."

"Why, monsieur, I did not have time to see that."

"What do you mean? Confound you! You haven't time to order the chef to cook it to a turn?"

"Monsieur, pardon; it was of the bridegroom that I was speaking. Excuse me, I will attend to everything you have told me;" and the waiter, to escape these questions, in which he got all mixed up, took the menu and escaped.

Cherami poured himself out some madeira saying to his new friend,—

"Look here, my dear Gustave! by constantly imitating a Swiss bear, by going out of the room into the passage and out of the passage into the room, you will gain nothing. They have told you that the wedding party is at the table, and

naturally they will remain there for some time. Do the same as they are doing. Place yourself opposite me, try to calm yourself, and let us have dinner. And here, just to the moment, is our soup, which exhales the most delicious fumes. Allow me to serve you."

The young man sat down to the table, swallowed some spoonfuls of soup, then pushed aside his plate, saying,—

"No, it is impossible for me to take anything."

"Well, then, talk to me. Wait, while I am eating, since you will not do the same yourself, it will be an excellent opportunity for you to tell me a little of the history of your love affair with that ungrateful Fanny."

"Yes, monsieur, willingly; I will tell you all and you will see if I am wrong to complain of her inconstancy."

"Men are hardly ever wrong. Come, my dear fellow, tell me all about it. I shall not lose one word of your narrative, because I can listen very well while eating."

"My name is Gustave Darlemont; I am twenty-five years of age. My parents lived upon their income but, in order to amass enough to live more grandly, they placed all their money in an annuity."

"Devil take it! they were rather egotistical parents. If everyone were to do the same, the word inheritance would become superfluous.

Here is a fillet which is worth its weight in gold. Have a bit of it."

"Thanks, monsieur. As for me, I bear no grudge against my parents for having so done. They had earned their money by their labor, they gave me a good education, and what could I ask more?"

"Really, you are a charming fellow. Why, hang it! you might have asked for some money. Let me pour you out some of this bordeaux-leoville, it's fresh, it is sweet, it will refresh your ideas. Go on, I beg of you."

"My parents died and from what they left me in furniture, jewels and silverware, I obtained twelve hundred francs income."

"A mere nothing, not enough to pay your tailor. In truth, one need not pay him at all."

"I was then seventeen years of age and hardly knew what career to embrace."

"And while waiting, you embraced all the pretty women who fell into your hands. I know how that is."

"Oh, no, monsieur, I was very steady. I have never been what is called a ladies' man."

"So much the worse, young man, so much the worse. There is nothing better than women to form youth. You will tell me perhaps, that they also harm them sometimes, but what experience one acquires! I might cite myself as an example; but we are not talking about me. Go on, my

dear fellow, for I am your friend. Although Aristotle has said, "Oh my friends, there are no friends," I maintain that there are, and that it was only a play on words of the Greek philosopher to whom, for that thought alone, had I been Philip I would not have confided the education of my son Alexander. But excuse me, I am all attention."

"Fortunately I had an uncle, named Grandcourt, my mother's brother. He took me to his home. He was a man of some originality but very sensible and obliging, not old either; in fact, he is now only forty-eight."

"So much the worse, so much the worse! You are decidedly unlucky about inheritances. Is this uncle rich?"

"No, hardly that, though he is in very easy circumstances, I believe."

"What occupation does he follow?"

"He is a banker."

"Everybody makes a little at that."

"Oh, my uncle is a very prudent man who never ventures upon hazardous speculations. He is known for his exactitude and his inflexible honesty."

"You don't say so! That is the man to whom I shall intrust my funds—when I have too many."

"I therefore went into my uncle's house as a clerk, and with him I led a very happy life. We went often to the play, to concerts, to the best

restaurants. It was always my uncle who paid for everything."

"Deuce take it! it wouldn't have looked well if it had been the nephew who paid; I see that your uncle is not a miser, but one who loves pleasure. Good enough, he is one of those uncles whom I esteem, and I shall be delighted to know him."

"Something happened to me, monsieur, at this time, which changed all my existence, which made me acquainted with a feeling, the power of which I had, up to that time, ignored; for although I had had several flirtations, I had never known real love. Ah, monsieur! from the moment that I saw Fanny I felt in my heart that I was born to a new life. I was no longer the same, no! up to then I had not existed."

"That is a way of speaking usual enough among lovers. They have never existed before their first mad passion. Ungrateful beings! who often forget the happiest days of their youth. Ah! here is our salmon trout. Excellent fish! You will taste just a morsel of it, will you not?"

"My uncle had bought some Orleans railway shares from M. Gerbault, Fanny's father. I was intrusted to carry them to him. M. Gerbault was absent and Fanny received me and invited me to await her father's return. We chatted. I was surprised to hear this young person speak to me of matters of the Exchange as intelligently as any stockbroker could have done."

“And was that what charmed you with her?”

“Oh no, monsieur; but while she was speaking to me, I examined Fanny. Her eyes were lively, witty, her smile charming and there was in her whole appearance an infantine grace which took my taste, and a natural graciousness which immediately put me at my ease. I was only with her for half an hour on that occasion, and at the end of it, one might have believed that we were old acquaintances. I took the greatest pleasure in listening to her and I believe she saw it, for she always found something more to say until her father returned, greatly to my sorrow. M. Gerbault was an old man of very polished manners. He smiled as he heard his daughter question me as to the different values of all the stocks, and he said to me—‘It is very vexatious for Fanny that women no longer go on ’Change, for I believe she would like to install herself there every day. She has a very marked taste for speculation. I dare not say for gambling; I hope that it will never come to that. In fact, monsieur, she possesses five or six thousand francs as does her sister. That came to them from their mother. Adolphine has very wisely placed her money in government bonds, but Fanny, oh, that is quite another thing; she wants to speculate, she wants to buy stocks, and probably she will lose her money.’ ‘Why should I do that, father?’ answered Fanny. ‘Why should not chance be

favorable to me? Besides, I do not want to buy anything on conditions. I shall have only cash transactions; I shall buy stock, I shall keep it, and I shall sell it when it goes up. It seems to me that all that is quite right, and that there is no need of being a stockbroker's clerk to understand this operation. With my six thousand francs I should never have anything but a poor little income. Why should I not seek to augment my capital?' 'Just as you like,' said M. Gerbault; 'you are quite at liberty to dispose of your property at your own free will.'

"You may well understand that I flattered the hopes of this damsel, with whom I was very much taken. I proposed to keep her informed as to the course of affairs on 'Change and of the fluctuations and values of stock. She accepted, and M. Gerbault, knowing that I was M. Grandcourt's nephew, accorded me, from that moment, free access to his house. In fact, my dear monsieur—Ah, excuse me, but I do not yet know your name."

"Why, that's true, by Jove! I did not think to tell you. I am called Arthur Cherami, formerly a man of property and spoken of as the first dandy in the capital. I set the style and brought things into fashion and all the women were wild over me. Oh, my history is very short. At twenty-two years I had thirty-five thousand francs income; at thirty I had nothing left.

When I say nothing, that is a figure of speech. There still remain to me some little incomings, some trifles, but my fortune is all gone. Oh, well! upon my word of honor, young man, if I could live it over again, I believe I should do the same to-morrow. I have employed my youth well, and everybody can't say as much. Must one be old, gouty and infirm to enjoy life? One cannot crack nuts when one has no teeth, and therefore one must not wait for age before he plays the part of a young man. Now, if I were to add to that that I am still a jolly fellow, as brave as Cæsar, as gallant as Francis I, and a philosopher like Socrates, you will know me as well as if you were my groom. By Jove! this is an excellent fish! Why don't you eat a little of it."

"I prefer to tell you about my love."

"So be it; that won't give you an indigestion. As for me, so much the worse. I will eat for two and I shall listen to you. Go on."

CHAPTER IV

GUSTAVE'S LOVE AFFAIRS. A GENTLEMAN WHO HAD DINED WELL. THE PUNCH PRODUCES ITS EFFECT

"I MAY as well tell you, M. Arthur," resumed Gustave, "that having permission to go to M. Gerbault's house, I profited fully by it."

"I can well believe that, my dear monsieur," answered Cherami, more interested in his sauces than in Gustave's love sorrows. "This fish is perfect, you are very wrong not to have some of it."

"M. Gerbault, a former clerk in the Ministry, has but a moderate fortune. He is a widower with two daughters whom he has educated very well. Fanny, the elder, has some talent; she is a musician and understands English and Italian thoroughly."

"And her sister?"

"Adolphine also plays the piano; she sings well enough and is very sweet, very amiable in character. But you must know that I did not occupy myself with her sister; I had eyes only for Fanny. Her grace, her wit, her beautiful eyes, all turned my head. She was quite aware of this and instead of rebuking me, she seemed to try

to redouble her attractiveness, to make me still further in love."

"Devil take it! she's a skilled coquette."

"Oh no, monsieur, but it is her way always to be charming. She cannot help it."

"Here is the capon served with coarse salt. This is the moment for the champagne frappé. Confound it! you will drink some of that?"

"Why, monsieur."

"It will give you nerve, vigor. One doesn't know what may happen this evening and a man should always hold himself ready to go on parade."

"A year rolled by; I had had the happiness of operating some stocks for Fanny which proved very successful, by which she made nearly three thousand francs, in railroads. She was delighted, and dreamed already of an immense fortune. I told her that I loved her and she answered me, smiling, that she had suspected it. Then I asked her if she would accept me for her husband and she said in reply, 'My father can only give to each of his daughters twenty thousand francs dowry, and you know what I possess besides that. It is not much.' 'What does that matter?' said I; 'I love you with all my soul, and if you had nothing to your dowry, I should nevertheless esteem myself the happiest of men if you would but give me your hand.' Then I added: 'I have twelve hundred francs income and earn another eighteen hundred francs a year from my

uncle. You see that we should have quite enough to live happily.'

"Fanny listened to me; she seemed to be reflecting, but I had taken her hand, which I was pressing in mine, and she did not withdraw it. 'Would you like me to ask your father for your hand to-morrow?' said I. 'It is unnecessary,' she said to me; 'we have plenty of time, and you need have no fear in regard to that. My father has told me a hundred times that he will never go against me in any choice that I may make, but he knows well that I will take no one for a husband who would not make me happy.' I was desirous that our marriage should take place immediately, but Fanny wished, before marrying, to still further increase her capital, in order that she might have a larger dowry to offer me. I told her again and again that I did not care for that, but I could not make her listen to reason."

"If you took that for love, my dear Gustave, you were hardly a good judge of the article. I drink to your health."

"Well, monsieur, Fanny was always so amiable. She looked at me with so much sweetness in her eyes and made the dearest faces imaginable."

"Yes, yes; that's understood. All the battery of feminine wiles."

"Six months had passed again, and I entreated Fanny to fix the time for our union. Unfortu-

nately, the railway shares gave no further dividends, the stocks that she had bought fell. It was necessary to wait until they should rise again and Fanny was very vexed at the turn things had taken on 'Change. It was towards this time—Ah! then my unhappiness began.”

“Courage, my dear Gustave, and also a glass of this moët. Take a wing of this capon, a little of the white meat only; no? nothing? Oh well, confound it! I'll sacrifice myself and eat the whole of it, no matter what the result may be. Only, I must drink to wash it down. To your health!”

“Thus, as I was telling you, it was towards this time that this M. Auguste Monleard made her acquaintance, at a ball, I think, at the Gerbault's. He asked and obtained, from the father, permission to come sometimes and to have some music with the young ladies. I did not know that until later on, for I had not yet met that gentleman. When I saw him for the first time, I felt a presentiment that his presence at M. Gerbault's house would be fatal to my love. This M. Monleard made a good deal of stir. He had a cabriolet, a negro; and last, he had, they said, forty thousand francs income. All this would have been quite indifferent to me had I not perceived that he was very much impressed, very gallant to Fanny. However, the latter still smiled at me in a charming fashion, but when I said to her, 'Fix the time of our union; allow me

to speak to your father'; she would answer me: 'Oh, not yet; we have plenty of time. I must increase my capital before that.'

"One morning I had escaped from my uncle's, for he scolded me sometimes about the love which made me neglect business."

"By the way, did your uncle approve of this idea of marriage?"

"Not at all; several times he said to me: 'You are too young to marry; wait a bit longer.' But when he saw how much I loved Fanny, he at length said to me:— 'Do as you wish, but, in your place, I would not have a young lady who speculates in railways.'"

"I am a good deal of your uncle's opinion."

"And he added,— 'You know that I shall not give you a sou to marry on'; and I answered him,— 'You know that I ask nothing but your friendship.'"

"A good answer which bound you to nothing. A glass of champagne?"

"I've already had some."

"A good reason for having some more. Oh, my dear fellow, shall we have some macaroni-périgueux and a parfait à la vanille."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Waiter! where are they in the wedding feast?"

"Monsieur, they are at the second course."

"Have they got no further than that?"

"This dear fellow, Gustave, is really delightful.

Because he can't eat himself, he thinks that nobody else has any appetite."

"Waiter, is the bride eating?"

"Yes, monsieur; oh, she's eating of everything."

"She's eating of everything!"

Gustave angrily reseated himself at the table and held his plate to his vis-à-vis, saying to him,—

"Well, I'm going to eat too. Arthur, give me some capon and serve me liberally."

"Why, what's to be done now. What a man you are! You're coming to yourself now. But there's hardly anything left of the capon but a drumstick and the carcass; but it is the most delicate part."

"Give it to me! Give it to me! Ah! what a fool, what an idiot I was to fall into despair for a woman who mocks at me, and who is able to eat everything when she knows that I am devoured by grief."

"You had no common sense and that is what I have been trying to tell you."

"Give me something to drink!"

"Bravo! let us drink. It is delicious, this champagne, and I know what I am talking about."

"Yes, I wish to stifle regret, I want to forget everything, I want to love another woman."

"By Jove! that is the true way out of it. I believe in homœopathy in love."

Gustave swallowed the contents of his glass at a draught, then he ate several mouthfuls with a

kind of avidity, but presently he pushed away his plate and, letting his head fall on his breast, he muttered,—

“Oh, no, I shall never love another. I feel that that would be quite impossible for me.”

“There! now he’s allowing himself to be again overcome by his passion. We shall have some trouble to cure you, I see, my dear fellow; but we’ll do it if it takes ten years, and I will never leave you for a second. Look here, my dear Gustave! Pull yourself together a bit and finish telling me your story, which I presume must be drawing to its close, and which interests me in the highest degree.”

“Ah, yes, you are right. I was telling you that one morning on going to M. Gerbault’s, I found Mademoiselle Adolphine alone. She received me with such a sorrowful expression that I could not help asking her what had caused her grief and she answered me,— ‘I am sorry for you; I am grieved because of you; for I know how much you love my sister and I foresee what trouble will be yours when you learn that she is going to be married, and not to you.’

“‘My God!’ cried I, ‘can it be possible that Fanny would deceive me; give herself to another.’ ‘Yes,’ resumed Adolphine; ‘and I think that it is frightful to allow you still to hope when, for the past fortnight, her marriage with M. Auguste Monleard has been settled.’ ‘She marry M.

Monleard!' cried I: 'she sacrifice me to that man! and yet she smiled upon me only yesterday when I swore to her that I should love her all my life.' 'That was why,' said Adolphine, 'I made up my mind to tell you everything. I did not wish that you should be longer deceived.' I need not tell you the condition of despair in which I found myself. Adolphine vainly tried to console me; I could not yet believe in Fanny's treachery and I wanted to see her, to learn from her own lips that she preferred my rival.

"The next day I found her alone. Will you believe that she received me as calmly as ever and with the same smile? It was at this point that I exclaimed,— 'They have deceived me, have they not, Fanny? You are not going to become the wife of another.' Then she made me a little face which she tried to render sad as she answered me,— 'No, Gustave, they have not deceived you. Oh, good heavens! you must not bear me any grudge; besides, that would not help matters, my dear. I have reflected. We had not enough money to marry each other. We should have been compelled to lead an existence which would have obliged you always to calculate, before taking the slightest pleasure, whether it would be compatible with our means, and, to be frank, it is not pleasant to have to calculate if one can give one's self a pleasure; whether one may buy a bonnet or a jewel which one desires.

I therefore thought that it would be wiser for me to marry M. Monleard, who has a fine fortune, and I have accepted his hand; but it seems to me that you should not bear me a grudge because I have acted according to reason, and we can still remain friends.' 'I, your friend,' said I, melting into tears, 'when you give yourself to another, when you are bringing misfortune on my whole life?' I don't know what she answered me, but some one came to tell her that they had brought the materials for her bridal toilet and she hastily left me. Her indifference and coolness exasperated me. As I stayed there alone, I know not what ideas assailed me, but I wanted to die. I was going out, firmly resolved not to survive Fanny's treason, when suddenly I felt myself clasped by two caressing arms, while a friendly voice said, entreatingly,— 'Be a man, Gustave; be courageous and learn to support this misfortune which to-day is breaking your heart. Time will soften your grief, you will love another woman who will love you also, who will understand your heart, and later on, you will be happy, much happier than she will be who thinks only of fortune; but I beg of you, promise me to live.'

"It was Adolphine who spoke to me thus with streaming eyes. On seeing that my grief was shared, I felt a little solaced, for misfortune makes us egotistical and when we experience it we feel that others should suffer as we do. I

promised Fanny's sister to renounce my gloomy ideas and I left the house, to which I never returned."

"I drink to this good little Adolphine's health! I love her, this sensible sister. I carry her in my heart; and the dear uncle, what did he say when he learned the result of your love affair?"

"My uncle? Oh, he doesn't believe in love."

"He was quite right not to believe in that of your damsel Fanny."

"He has no confidence in women."

"He has probably studied them."

"In fact, when I told him that Fanny was marrying another, he had the heart to answer that it was very fortunate for me."

"Frankly, I am of his opinion, for in fact, my good fellow, since the young lady did not love you, it is better as it is."

"Why, yes, she did love me before knowing this Monleard."

"She gave you the preference when you had no rival."

"She has been overcome by his luxury, his presents."

"It's much better for you that this should have happened before your marriage than after. To your health! Ah here's the macaroni-périgueux with truffles, too! That's the style! Are you acquainted with this manner of preparing macaroni?"

"It seems they must have hurried the ceremony, for it is not more than twelve days since I had that last interview with her and to-day I learned that the marriage was taking place at the church of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, then the repast and the ball here."

"Oh, and then that went to your head and you said to yourself,— 'I want to be there; I want to see the inconstant girl's face when she perceives me.'"

"Yes, monsieur, yes; but no doubt they told me the hour for the church wrong, because when I arrived the ceremony was over and they had left."

"So much the better. It was one stroke of the poniard the less."

"Then I came here like a madman and as I ran along, I said to myself,— 'I must see her, I must—' and you know the rest, monsieur."

"Yes, indeed! and if I had not been here, God knows what would have happened. But I am lucky; I almost always get there just when somebody needs me. Let us moisten the macaroni. I defy all the wedding parties in the establishment to dine better than I."

Cherami had now reached the dessert. He had amply indemnified his stomach for the privations of the evening before and so often had he moistened his food with madeira, bordeaux and champagne, that his face had become very red,

his eyes very small and his tongue thicker, which did not prevent him, however, from making continual use of that member.

Gustave had only drunk two glasses of champagne, but as he had not eaten anything at all, that had overcome him a little, and he again began to walk back and forth into the corridor. Then the waiter who had served them came running quickly to tell them,—

“Monsieur, the ladies have begun to leave the table. I think that they are going to dress themselves for the ball, for some of them have already put on their bonnets.”

“Then run, take the bride’s sister, Mademoiselle Adolphine, aside and tell her that M. Gustave must positively speak to her. Tell her that I am at the end of this corridor, where I wait for her. Tell her it is absolutely necessary that she should come. You understand? Absolutely necessary. Wait! here are five francs more for you.”

“Very well, monsieur. The bride’s sister, but how am I to know her?”

“It is Mademoiselle Adolphine.”

“Yes, yes; I’ll go, monsieur, as speedily as possible.”

Gustave went back into the room where Cherami was in the act of admiring the sparkling champagne in his glass.

“She’s coming! I’m going to speak to her,” cried the young man.

"By Jove! is she really coming to seek us here."

"Yes. Oh! I'm quite sure that she'll come. She would not press me to commit some folly."

"Well, so much the better, confound it! Let her come and we'll tell her what we think of her. She's a blockhead, a coquette."

"But it is Adolphine who is coming. It's not Fanny."

"It's Adolphine, the good little sister! Oh, that's different; I'm going to kiss her. I will even pay her a little court if she will allow me."

"They are just leaving to go and dress for the ball, but before they do so, I want—. Ah, some one is coming this way, a woman. It is she!"

It was, in fact, young Adolphine, who came running, greatly disturbed, into the room, exclaiming,—

"What, M. Gustave, you are here! Why, why, did you come?"

"Because I knew that she was here and I hoped to see her again."

"But good heavens! what folly; and you, monsieur, you promised me to watch over him."

"Well, mademoiselle, I have done nothing else. I have not lost sight of him for a minute and if I had not been here to restrain him, he would have gone twenty times already to make a disturbance at your wedding and horns for the bridegroom."

"Ah, Gustave!"

"No, Adolphine, no, don't believe that."

"No, mademoiselle, you must not trust to what he tells you; he hardly knows what he is saying. Happily I am here and I am calm, I am prudent."

"But why did you come here?"

"Mademoiselle, we came here for some dinner, which is not at all a forbidden thing; for, in fact, although one be not a guest at the wedding, that does not prevent one from dining and dining very well, I can assure you."

"But I cannot stay any longer. We are going off to dress ourselves. I am sure they are waiting for me. What do you want of me, M. Gustave?"

"To beg you to let me speak with your sister just once."

"To Fanny? Why, that is impossible; besides, what could you say to her?"

"I should say good-by to her forever. I should tell her that I wanted her to be happy, although she has brought misfortune on me."

"But how can you suppose that she can speak with you in private? There are always people around her. What would they say of her? what would they think of her?"

"If you refuse me, I will go and speak to her in the ballroom."

"No, no! Wait here, then, and when we come back for the ball, I will try and make her come down this passage."

"Oh, thank you! Thank you a thousand times! Oh, how good you are!"

"Good-by, I must go; but please hide yourself, don't show yourself."

So saying, Adolphine made a sign of intelligence to Cherami, who imagined that the young lady wanted to kiss him; but she disappeared at the moment when the latter left the table to go and embrace her and as the waiter came into the room just as the young lady left it, the gentleman applied a resounding kiss on the waiter's cheek."

"Confound it! what's this," cried Cherami, suddenly pushing the waiter away, who, astonished at the greeting which he had received, stood all abashed in front of the door. "Why the devil did you thrust yourself into my face, waiter? Pest take the idiot! I said to myself,—'Here's this young person uses very common soap.'"

"Excuse me, monsieur, that was not my fault. I came in and you threw yourself into my arms. I understand very well that you did not intend to kiss me."

"It's fortunate you understand that."

"Waiter, where are the ladies now?"

"They are all gone, monsieur."

"And the men?"

"Some of them are gone also, but a good many stayed and are sitting down to play cards."

“And what are they doing at the Blanquette wedding, just now?”

“The Blanquette wedding guests are still at table and they are singing, monsieur.”

“Ah! that’s just what I should have expected. They will stay at table until ten o’clock, these little tradespeople who sing at dessert—awfully bad form. However, I confess that I sometimes also like to hum a song; I even compose them on occasion, I have written some that Panard and Colle would not have disowned. But I like comic songs—and a bit broad too; none of your sickly sentimental things on roses, zephyrs, and spring-time, and none of your political songs either. I abominate them, although great reputations are made with them; many a one would have been but an ordinary songster had he not flattered passions and parties, and has been placed on a pinnacle because he always had the words country or liberty at the end of his couplets. O Armand Gouffé! O Désaugiers! you did not employ this means and you are little spoken of. You are, nevertheless, the true French meistersingers; your faithful genius knew how to discover and to sing a thousand diverse subjects, which is a great deal more difficult than always to intone the same refrain.”

“But tell me, my dear M. Arthur, while I am awaiting the return of the bride here, that I may bid her a last good-by,—tell me if your occupa-

tions call you elsewhere; do not put yourself out for me; leave me, I have already only too greatly abused your kindness."

"Me leave you! the idea of such a thing. What do you take me for? What! after accepting the dinner you offered me, do you suppose I would leave you immediately after the dessert. Out upon such a thought. They are snobs who conduct themselves thus, and—God be thanked! I know how to live. But perhaps I bother you? Is my presence disagreeable to you?"

"Far otherwise, my dear monsieur; you have evinced an interest which I shall never forget."

"We were cut out to be friends—and we are friends; that's all settled, your affairs are mine, what concerns you, concerns me also. Where there is peril for you, it is my duty to watch over you; and, you know, while you are talking to the bride, if her husband should by chance come prowling about here, I shall put myself in the way and say to him,— "I'm very sorry, my good fellow, but no one can pass."

"Ah, thank you a thousand times for such devotion. Waiter! Waiter! our bill."

"You'll pay for the dinner, that's very good; but since we must remain here for some little time, perhaps, we might as well take something to pass the time."

"Order all that you wish."

"Waiter, make us some good rum punch, it is

excellent for the digestion; the English dine copiously, but they drink punch at dessert and find that it does them good. Will you play a game of cards to kill time?"

"Thank you, but it would be impossible for me to fix my mind on the game."

"I don't insist upon it. I like cards well enough but do not push my fancy for them to excess. Hang it, I don't say that later on I won't have a game at the Blanquette wedding. I told you that I know them? They are cloth merchants; still they play for rather high stakes, but that doesn't frighten me. Ah, here is our punch. I can sense the odor, one is well served in this house."

Cherami hastened to pour out the punch. Gustave refused at first to drink of it; finally he consented to accept a glass.

It was now dark and the lights were everywhere lit. With night our poor lover's thoughts became more pensive; he rested his head on his hands muttering, "All is ended. O Fanny! Fanny! you belong to another; ah, I shall die of my grief."

"Confound it!" said Cherami, swallowing cup after cup of the punch, "The young fellow is very plaintive, he's not at all cheered by the punch. As for me I feel quite differently, I am in the humor to dance at all these weddings, and to gamble there also; only I must borrow some napoleons of my new friend in order to tempt fortune. I have an

idea I should be lucky! Hi down there! my dear fellow, aren't you going to drink some more?"

"Oh, no, thank you, monsieur."

"Then I'll drink enough for two. This punch is too sweet. Hallo, waiter, put some more rum in this and don't spare it."

"Why, monsieur, there is no more punch in the bowl."

"Well, make another bowl, but let it be stiffer than the last."

Another bowl was brought, and after drinking of it, Cherami, wishing to arise, was obliged to hold on to the table so as not to fall; however, although he felt his legs totter under him, he wanted to put on a good face and did his best to keep his equilibrium as he directed his steps towards the door.

"These ladies are a very long time returning," muttered Gustave, who was still walking back and forth from his room to the corridor.

"My dear fellow, when women are dressing one can never be sure how long they'll be at it. One day, in my palmy time, I remember, I was waiting for my mistress to go to the theatre to see a new piece. I think it was at the Opéra Comique—no matter. She had finished dressing herself and had been long enough in the process, when looking in her mirror she exclaimed: 'My wreath of cornflowers is placed too far over my forehead, I must change it, it is only changing a

pin.' 'All right,' said I, 'stick in your pin; I will wait for you.' My dear fellow, that pin and all those which were added to it took an hour and a half to adjust; and when we got to the theatre the new play was ended!"

Cherami, perceiving that his melancholy young companion had again fallen into a deep reverie, and was paying not the slightest attention to what he said, decided to venture into the corridor, muttering,—

"I must have some air, these little close rooms are as hot as the tropics. Ah, whom do I see down there? Ladies! an infinite number of the dear creatures. Come, let's just cast a glance at them, the fair sex attracts me—it's a passion with me."

The ladies of M. Monleard's wedding party were, in truth, beginning to return to the scene of the festivities, decked out in all their ballroom finery. In order to reach the hall where they were going to dance, they were obliged to pass through the end of the passage in which Cherami's room was situated, and which led to the grand staircase. Cherami planted himself opposite this staircase and there played the ladies' man; bowing to all the ladies as if they knew him, he addressed to them, as they passed in front of him, such speeches as these,—

"Charming, really charming! A divine toilet. Here are shoulders white enough to make

Venus despair. Ah, we shall make some conquests. Prettily dressed hair—bravo! ah, there's a mamma who still wants to act as though she were young. Dear lady, you will have some trouble in finding a partner, I warn you. Here are pretty faces to catch all the gay young sparks. Ah, what beautiful eyes! They are carbuncles. Who will accept my hand or my arm? I am at your orders, fair ladies."

But the ladies, instead of accepting the hand which this gentleman offered, passed him without answering, or quickly drew away from him, because there was something untidy and disorderly about his whole person, which did not accord with ball dresses; also he smelt so strongly of punch and liqueurs, that it was impossible for any one to pass by him without its reaching their noses.

Several ladies put their handkerchiefs in front of their faces to pass the gentleman, and some of them exclaimed,— "Who is this man?" "Where does he come from?" "He is tipsy!" "Certainly he was not invited to M. Monleard's wedding." "What is he doing there, like a sentinel?" "He speaks to everyone in the most unceremonious fashion." "He is positively poisonous with wines and liqueurs. Can't they send the horrid man away from here?"

The ladies' complaints reached the ears of the gentlemen who had remained at the card tables, and several of them rose, saying,—

"Come, we must know who this man is who dares to speak to ladies whom he does not know."

Cherami offered his hand to a pretty lady who refused it and immediately put her handkerchief to her nose. This pantomime, which was renewed very frequently before "handsome Arthur," began to displease him and he suddenly cried,—

"Why, what is the matter with all these prudes, that they hide their faces in their handkerchiefs? Do they think by chance that I wish to kiss them? I've seen prettier faces than yours and they did not seek to escape me, my children!"

"To whom are you speaking, monsieur? Is it to these ladies, that you dare to address such insulting remarks?"

"Why, who is this? Where does he come from? He's got a good cheek!"

"It is you, monsieur, of whom we should ask that. Get out of this as quickly as you can, or I will throw you out of the door!"

"You will show me the door! Learn that I dined here, with my friend Gustave—Gustave What-do-you-call-him, and that I have quite as much right to stay here as you have, and that I do not intend to go."

"I forbid you to speak to these ladies."

"Thank you, I've caught my hare."

The ladies intervened to prevent a quarrel, and managed to lead off the gentlemen, saying to them,— "You see very well that the man is tipsy

What satisfaction can you get from a man who is no longer himself? Leave him there and don't let us trouble ourselves about him any longer."

The men yielded to the ladies' wishes and they left Cherami and went into the ballroom. Meanwhile, the waiter who had served dinner in the private room came running to say to Cherami,—
"The gentleman who dined with you is going, somebody came to fetch him."

"What! my friend Gustave is going? Why, it isn't possible. He can't be going without me; besides he is waiting to see the bride—he must see the bride, they have promised him."

"I assure you the gentleman is going."

The gentleman who had wished to make an impression on the ladies, decided to return to the private room, at the door of which he found his young friend and a middle-aged gentleman of slight build, but whose cold and severe expression of countenance made him rather imposing. These gentlemen were on the point of departure.

"Why, what does this mean?" cried Cherami.
"What, my dear Gustave, you are going, and without me? your most intimate friend, your Orestes, your Patroclus!"

"Why, who is this new friend with whom I am quite unacquainted, whom I have never seen with you?" demanded the little gentleman of the young man whose arm he held. The latter stammered,
"Why, uncle, it is—it is a person who has had the

kindness to evince an interest in me—I was so unhappy—and to keep me company.”

“And whose dinner you paid for, probably. The gentleman doesn’t seem to have spared himself!”

“What am I to understand by this, is monsieur your uncle?”

“Yes, monsieur, I am Gustave’s uncle.”

“You are M. Grandcourt then.”

“Exactly.”

“Oh, delighted to make the acquaintance of my friend’s uncle.”

“I thank you, monsieur, but we are leaving.”

“What, you are going? You are unaware that your dear nephew wishes to speak once more to the bride, the perfidious Fanny?”

“I am perfectly aware of it, on the contrary, and it was precisely in order to prevent that interview, which might have led to a scandalous scene, that I hurried here and am taking my nephew away.”

“But her little sister, the charming Adolphine, would have procured the interview for us secretly.”

“You are mistaken, monsieur, for it was Mademoiselle Adolphine herself who let me know that my nephew was here, and begged me to employ my authority to get him away and prevent his seeing her sister again; that young person understood well how unconventional such an interview would have been.”

"What, it was the little sister who informed you? Why, the little mouse! These women all understand how to catch us."

"Upon this occasion, monsieur, Mademoiselle Adolphine has shown as much reason as prudence, and she deserves nothing but praise. Come, Gustave, say good-by to monsieur, thank him for the kindly offices which, no doubt, he intended to perform for you, and let us go."

"Then, uncle, it is ended, and you are taking me away without allowing me to see her again!"

"Really, my dear nephew, you shame me with your love, your regret for a woman who has disdained you, played with you as if you were a child. Come, be a man; despise and disdain her as she has despised and disdained you, and blush for having so misplaced your affections. Come, let us go."

"If you will allow me, dear uncle of my friend, I should very much like to be intimately acquainted with you—Gustave will tell you that I am worthy of your friendship. I can't go with you, because I mean to go to the Blanquette wedding, which is taking place on the second floor. Give me your address, if you please, I will call on you to-morrow to ask you to breakfast."

"It will be useless, sir, to-morrow we shall be at Havre."

"What, at Havre? Oh, that is all the same to

me, I will accompany you. Oh, my dear Gustave, leave your dear uncle for just a minute will you? I have a couple of words to say to you in private. Only a couple of words; but they are urgent."

But without listening further to Cherami, M. Grandcourt quickly led his nephew away and they had left the restaurant before Gustave's guest had finished speaking to them in the corridor.

CHAPTER V

THE CARD PLAYERS. THE BLANQUETTE'S WEDDING BALL

MONSIEUR Cherami, when it finally penetrated to his rather dulled perception that he was alone, returned to the room in which they had been dining and sat down again at the table, and poured out some punch for himself, saying,—

“It is extremely vexatious to a man of my stamp to be treated in such a manner and by such people! After all, I shall know how to find them again. This uncle doesn’t seem to me as amiable as his nephew; he has a somewhat reserved and dry physiognomy. He came like a bombshell; it is vexatious, I feel like abducting the bride, in the teeth of the Athenians and of all those vain prudes who hid their faces with their handkerchiefs. Suppose I go and give them all a wiggling? No, they aren’t worth the trouble. I prefer to go and look on at my friend Blanquette’s wedding; there I am known, and shan’t be treated as an intruder. Confound it! how unlucky that I hadn’t time to borrow a few napoleons from my new friend. He would have lent me some, I

haven't the slightest doubt. I waited too long, but I couldn't suspect that an uncle would suddenly arrive on the scene, as they do in vaudevilles, to make an unexpected dénouement. Why, what's that I hear!—music? They are playing a quadrille. It seems to me I could dance a little contradance. This music puts me quite in the mood for it. Oh, power of harmony! 'Emolit mores nec sinit esse feros.' Come, were I to say as much to all those jolly fellows who are dancing above, they would think I was asking for a cigar. Pretty music. By Jove, it shan't be said that I remain alone in a private room while everyone else is enjoying themselves. Let's go and take a turn at the Blanquette wedding."

And Cherami abruptly arose, put his hat on his head, took his little cane and hastily left the room. When he got into the passage, he more than once happened to come into collision with the wall; but with the instinct of a man accustomed to having drunken bouts, he drew himself up, steadied himself on his legs, and apostrophized himself thus,—

"Why, how's this? Staggering because of a few glasses of punch! Come, Arthur, I don't recognize you there, my boy! You are not tipsy, you must not be tipsy."

Then, the mind dominating the body, with a more assured step he neared the staircase. There the orchestra of the brilliant Monleard wedding

could be heard perfectly. Cherami stopped for a moment, saying,—

“What if I were suddenly to appear and make a scene with the perfidious Fanny on behalf of my young friend Gustave, what a stage effect—it would be prodigious! Yes, but these people don’t know me; they are not aware that I have had thirty-five thousand francs income and that I have been the most fashionable man in Paris! They would be capable of treating me as an intruder, I should resist, and duels would follow. Don’t let’s finish a well-employed day so badly. ‘Dies fasti’ as the Romans said. It’s astonishing how the punch brings back my Latin. Let’s go up a flight and go to the Blanquette wedding; there, at least, I know the bridegroom slightly, and the uncle intimately. I owe him four or five hundred francs for cloth, which is all the more reason he should receive me well; one never shuts the door on one’s debtors.”

When he reached the second landing, Cherami heard another orchestra; he crossed a large room in which he saw a great many men’s hats hanging on hooks; he hastened to hang up his own and place his cane beside it, saying,—

“I must be well behaved and not go into a wedding as though it were a guardroom. But what do I see in that corner? a glove, a good fresh-butter colored glove, faith! Hang it, that comes just at the right time! It’s for the left

hand, but no matter; I can keep the other in my pocket. It fits me, it really fits me very well. What a pity that the fellow who lost it did not drop the right hand one; no matter, this gives immediately an air of being dressed for the occasion. I shall hold my right hand under the tail of my coat, I can skilfully hold both tails in my hand and they may think that I am in full dress. Forward! March! against their cannons!"

Cherami penetrated into a second room, which was occupied by card players; there were two tables for whist and one for *écarté*; except two old ladies who made up a party at whist, there were only men in the room; and as they were all occupied in playing or in judging the tricks, they paid no attention to the gentleman in the plaid trousers.

Cherami smiled at every one, although he did not see a single person with whom he was acquainted; the whist tables were surrounded only by a few old connoisseurs who were following the game, and were therefore easily accessible. This was not the case with the *écarté* table; the young men pressed around it, and it was difficult to see the game.

Cherami circled around everybody for a few moments, elegantly scratching the end of his nose with his glove-covered hand, and still holding the other behind his back under the tail of his coat. Suddenly one of the players cried,—

"Twenty francs are lacking, gentlemen, who will put them up?"

"It's not likely I shall put them up," said a young man, turning toward Cherami; "they have extraordinary luck. However, I know Minoret, he is very lucky. When he sets himself to do it he can pass twenty times running."

"He still lacks twenty francs; let's see who will put them up?"

"I will," cried Cherami, in a resounding voice, "I will put them up. I have confidence in M. Minoret's luck."

These words attracted attention to Cherami. Several young men examined him, then smiled and said among themselves,—

"Who is this gentleman, may I ask?"

"What a strange figure!"

"And his dress is odder than himself. Who in the world would go to a wedding in a plaid waistcoat and trousers?"

"Shabby ones too."

"He was not at table, I am sure."

"No. I should like very much to know who this personage is. It seems that he knows Minoret."

After a moment the player they had called Minoret resumed,—

"Well, where is the person who is putting up the twenty francs? Let him hand them over."

"It is I, monsieur, who will make up what is

lacking!" answered Cherami, increasing his voice; "and by Jove it seems to me that when I say I will make it up it's just as good as done. But perhaps you will give me time to look for my pocket-book, which has slipped into the lining of my waistcoat."

The tone in which Cherami spoke had imposed on all those who surrounded the *écarté* table. It is rarely that loud speaking does not impose on the multitude; and if on the field of battle, victory is nearly always with the largest battalions; so in a discussion it is almost always with the loudest voice.

The players had therefore dealt the cards and begun to play again. Cherami gave himself up to a very curious pantomime. Having decided to withdraw his right hand from behind him, and thrusting it first into one pocket and then into another, then into his trousers pockets, he made a pretence of looking for something which he was perfectly well assured he should not find; but he did it with an ardor that would have convinced the most incredulous, and interspersed his efforts with half-broken words,— "Where the devil can I have put my pocket-book? It's inconceivable,—the thing one wants is always missing somehow. I had it in my hand just now to pay the coachman. Can I have put it outside my pocket, thinking I was putting it back inside? Let's look in here; it seems to me that I felt some-

thing. Ah, I've got it at last; no, that's my cigar-case. I don't think I have felt in here."

But, as our bettor had hoped, the game of *écarté* finished before he had terminated his researches, and presently these words struck on his ears and dilated his heart,—

"I was sure of it; Minoret has won again."

Immediately Cherami darted towards the *écarté* table, presented his left hand, closed, to the player for whom he had betted, saying to him,—

"I've just found my pocket-book, and here are the twenty francs that I have betted on your side, monsieur."

"They are unnecessary, monsieur, you need not put them down, since we have won," answered the gentleman they called Minoret, "and here are the twenty francs coming to you."

Saying these words the gentleman offered Cherami a twenty-franc piece. But, in order to take it he would have had to open the hand he kept so firmly closed, and then it would have been seen that he had nothing in it.

A shrewd man, he saw the danger of his position and saved it boldly, by answering in his turn,—

"Well, monsieur, keep the twenty francs, I continue to bet on you."

To those who think that it was very imprudent of this gentleman, who had not a sou, to gamble thus at one stroke with the twenty francs he

had just won, we answer that, in general, it is those who have the most need of money who love above all things to play for high stakes. Under the circumstances, besides, Cherami had an excuse in the embarrassing circumstances in which he found himself.

M. Minoret's luck was not deceptive; he passed six times again, and was not repulsed until the seventh. Cherami, who had continued to bet on the same side, therefore found himself the possessor of a hundred and twenty francs as he left the card table to which he had come without a sou on his person. It was a case of talking Latin, and our hero after saying, according to custom, "I have caught my hare," did not fail to add to the remark, "*Audaces fortuna juvat!*" Never was dictum better applied; one might perhaps think under the circumstances that this gentleman had been rather more than audacious.

"It must be acknowledged that I did well to bet," said Cherami to himself, rattling in his pocket the pieces of gold he had won. "Hang it, I should like to go and buy a glove for my right hand. Pshaw, what is the use of that? I can just as well have lost the other. The first possessor of this one must be in the same case himself. Let's go into the ballroom; I feel disposed to have a polka, and if there's an impressionable woman there I will fascinate her by my glances."

The ballroom was long and narrow; they were waltzing at the moment chosen by Cherami for his entrance. He began by throwing himself on a couple who were waltzing *à deux-temps*, which means that they were dancing out of time, since a waltz is always written in *trois-temps*. Surely those who invented this manner of waltzing could not have had a musical ear. But waltzers in *deux-temps* go extremely fast; it is, in fact, the aim of their innovation. Cherami, jolted suddenly by the couple who passed, took several steps backward and bumped into the waltzers *à trois-temps* who were abandoning themselves with delight to the charms of the waltz; the lady holding her head indolently to one side, and half closing her eyes to obviate dizziness; the gentleman holding himself firm on his hips, compressing the lady's waist with an arm of steel, and glancing at her in a very animated fashion.

The couple, suddenly recalled from their ecstasy by an individual who in jostling against them put them out of step, exclaimed,—

“Take care, why don't you? Good heavens, how awkward some people are!”

“Take care yourselves,” returned the gentleman with only one glove. “Devil take it, you have waltzed all over my back.”

“Why don't you withdraw out of range then, monsieur? No one stands in the way of the waltzers.”

"Monsieur, you have torn my gown and crushed my foot."

"Why, who is this ill-dressed gentleman, who rubs his nose with a glove the color of fresh butter, and throws himself against everybody? Do you know him?"

"No!"

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

"Wait, Minoret must know him; he betted for Minoret."

And the young man ran to M. Minoret, who had also come into the dancing room, and said to him, "My dear Minoret, tell us who is the singular individual in the plaid trousers. The one who just now betted for you?"

"What, that big man who has such a high color and holds his left hand in the air?"

"Exactly."

"I don't know him at all."

"Why he called you by name when he was betting for you."

"I don't know whether he knows me, but I don't know him."

"That's singular, he looks rather as though he were tipsy, does this gentleman. We must find out who he is. Ah, here's Armand, one of the groomsmen. Hi! Armand, come here a minute; tell us who is this individual who is dressed so carelessly for a wedding."

"This gentleman in a morning coat who elbows everyone?"

"That's the one."

"Why, I've just been asking the bride, and she doesn't know him either."

"And the bridegroom?"

"He is waltzing. But I see Blanquette, the uncle. I'll mention this individual to him and if no one knows him, I assure you he'll quickly be put outside the door."

But before the groomsman had rejoined the bridegroom's uncle, Cherami, who had perceived the cloth merchant, hurried up to him and struck him in the waistcoat, saying,—

"Here I am, my dear fellow! You did not invite me to your wedding, but I said to myself, 'I'll go, just the same, because with old acquaintances, one should not be put out by a trifle. Then what did I do? I dined here in a private room—dined perfectly, I flatter myself—and later on I came up to say good evening to you and to greet the bride, and dance with—no matter who—I am of an obliging disposition. And here is my old father Blanquette. 'Friends are always here,' as it says in the song."

M. Blanquette was very much surprised at again finding himself confronted by this gentleman whom he had met during the day as he alighted from his carriage; he did not seem flattered to see him at the ball, but unwilling

that a disagreeable scene should take place at his nephew's wedding, he forced himself to hide his displeasure and answered,—

“By Jove, M. Cherami, I did not expect to see you again. So you dined at this restaurant?”

“Yes, my estimable friend, and dined well, I beg you to believe.”

“One may easily see that.”

“What, it may be easily seen? And how may it be perceived, I beg to ask?”

“Why you look as if you—were in the mood to laugh.”

“I am always cheerful when I find myself in the midst of my friends. That is my disposition. Come, present me to the bride.”

“Why—allow me to say it—it seems to me you are hardly in ball costume, and the ladies are a little particular about that.”

“Had you invited me, I should have come got up for the occasion. You did not invite me, so I just dropped in as a neighbor. All is for the best, as Dr. Pangloss says. Present me to your niece.”

“Later on. They are going to dance. You see they are getting in place for a quadrille.”

“Devil take it! I am not going away then, I am going to dance. I was one of the best dancers of the Chaumière, a pupil of Chicard. They used to fight to see me dance the ‘Stormy Tulip.’ I want to show you that I haven’t forgotten it.”

Immediately leaving Blanquette, he who had been formerly called "handsome Arthur" directed his steps towards the benches where the dancers were seated, and presenting his gloved hand, said to a young lady,—

"Beautiful caperer, will you do me the favor of accepting my hand for this contradance?"

"I am engaged, monsieur."

Cherami addressed slight variations of this phrase to a great many, but there were no variations in the answer made him, which was always,

"I am engaged."

Not a young girl or a young married lady cared to dance with a gentleman who had so red a face, was so badly dressed, smelt so strongly of rum, and who always kept his right hand behind him.

"Confound it, all the ladies have been invited to dance beforehand. I have been refused all along the line."

However, at a ball there is inevitably some woman of mature age, ugly, and badly dressed, who still has the pretension to range herself among the dancers. Our dandy Arthur perceived a lady of this species in an embrasure; she had on her head a kind of turban overloaded with flowers, feathers, and lace, which formed a mass fearful and wonderful to behold.

"I shall be very unfortunate if she is engaged," said Cherami to himself, bravely walking towards the turbaned lady.

He had only addressed a part of his invitation to her, when she rose, as though pushed by a spring, and seized his gloved hand, answering,—

“Willingly; yes, monsieur, I accept; I’ll dance as long as you like.”

“In that case, fair lady, let us take our places.”

Nearly all the quadrilles were formed, but nothing stopped Cherami; he placed himself in front of an undersized man and his partner, and when the young man said to him,— “But, monsieur, that place is taken, we were there before you,” he answered arrogantly,—

“I don’t know if you were here before I was, my good man; but I do know that I have the honor to be here with madame, and that nothing short of a bayonet charge will dislodge me.”

The young man dared not resist, besides on all sides they were saying to each other,—

“This very original gentleman is dancing with Aunt Merlin.”

“What, is Aunt Merlin going to dance?”

“Yes, with an individual with Scotch underpinnings. It will be very funny.”

And from all sides those who were not dancing came running to see the quadrille in which Cherami and Aunt Merlin were to figure.

“Confound it! I have lost one of my gloves,” cried Arthur, pretending to feel in his pocket, and looking on the ground around him. “Fair lady, will you excuse me for dancing with one glove?”



"Oh, certainly, monsieur," answered the lady with the turban, simpering, "you are quite excusable, besides, the same thing has happened to M. Courbichon; on arriving this evening at the ball, he perceived that he had lost one of his gloves—only with him it is the left one that is missing."

"Ah, that is very funny! then the two of us would make a pair. I shall laugh at that for some time to come. It is our turn, fair lady."

The first figure passed off quietly enough. The English chain and the cat's tail failed to afford Cherami an opportunity to exhibit his talent, but in the second, where they advanced two by two, he began to execute some of the steps and poses of the cancan, in the boldest fashion.

The men were laughing like mad, and the women also, though they murmured,—

"Why, it is frightful; where in the world does this gentleman suppose himself to be?"

The funniest part of the thing was that Cherami's partner, stimulated by the strange and eccentric balancings of her squire, thought that she ought to do as he did, and set herself to twisting and throwing her legs to right and left with an avidity which set in motion all the flowers massed on her turban. The shouts of laughter were doubled.

"I am not afraid to say we are producing a certain effect," said Cherami to his partner, "but

that does not astonish me. Every time I dance they crowd around to see me."

However, at the other end of the hall people were saying among themselves,—

"The gentleman with the plaid trousers is making Aunt Merlin dance the cancan. It is extremely funny."

There were some couples who stopped dancing to go and see Aunt Merlin and her cavalier do the cancan. The report of it presently reached the ears of M. Blanquette's uncle, and the mother of the bride, a very respectable woman, came to him and said,—

"Monsieur Blanquette, go at once, I beg of you, and tell my sister not to dance the cancan. Everybody here is making game of her, and she does not perceive it. You were very wrong to invite that big gentleman who has such a red face."

"By Jove, madame, I assure you I did not invite him. He is a man who owes me money, one whom I formerly knew when he was rich and very good form. He is completely changed. He saw me this morning as we were alighting from the carriage, and this evening he ventured to come to our ball. I did not dare to tell him to go, because, as you can understand, that is rather an embarrassing thing to do, but if he allows himself to dance in an indecent manner I shall hesitate no longer."

Monsieur Blanquette directed his steps towards

the quadrille which was producing such a prodigious effect. Cherami was engaged in doing "la chapoule" with his partner, who continued to second her squire as best she could. The bridegroom's uncle threaded his way behind that lady and whispered to her,—

"Madame Merlin, I beg of you don't dance like that. It is a sort of dance that is the fashion at the tea gardens. One does not yield to such abandon in a ballroom."

Madame Merlin answered peevishly, "It seems to me I dance very well, and the proof of it is, there is a crowd around to look at us."

"I assure you, Madame Merlin, it is very unconventional, and it vexes your sister."

"My sister is vexed because she no longer dances herself; let her leave me alone. I wish to dance."

"What is the matter now, my nymph," said Cherami, "what is Father Blanquette saying to you?"

"He asserts that our dancing is unconventional."

"Why, I think it is pretty. He must have come out of the ark to be scared at our dances. Doesn't he go to the theatre now? He can't have seen the Spanish dancers, although they have appeared in nearly all the theatres. Confound it! if he had seen those ladies dance their fandango, their jota, their bolero, showing their

legs even up to their garters—it is quite different to the cancan! But that didn't prevent the Spaniards from attracting a crowd everywhere. And you find fault because I dance the cancan, and you go to see the libertine dances executed by women whose costumes add to the effect of their dance. Confound it! you don't know what you want! It is our turn, my Terpsichore, attention here! there is the pastourelle, and I will spare you something for the 'cavalier seul.'”

Aunt Merlin darted off like an arrow, paying no attention to M. Blanquette's remonstrances, who sighed deeply on seeing how easy it is to lead women to commit follies when their age should render them reasonable.

However, the moment had come for Cherami to do the “cavalier seul”; heated by what he had drunk, and recalling the prowess of his youth, he executed the “pas de l'araignée,” which consisted in throwing himself flat on the ground on his stomach in front of his vis-à-vis. This gymnastic feat obtained the most uproarious success, and Aunt Merlin, turning towards Papa Blanquette, exclaimed,—

“What do you say to that? Could you do the same?”

“Certainly not, madame, and I would not even try to do as much,” answered the bridegroom's uncle; “Why, I think it is most audacious.

Your partner must be possessed of the devil to commit such follies."

Aunt Merlin listened no further to Blanquette; the last figure was being danced, that in which there was a galop, and Cherami said to her as he took her by the waist,—

"We'll get into the midst of all the other dancers, and confound it, they'll have to look out for themselves. They elbowed me in waltzing but we will pay them back in their own coin."

Immediately he whirled his partner off, turning and galoping at the same time. The "handsome Arthur" of the old time had been one of the most remarkable dancers in those monstrous galops which they executed at the Opéra at the masked balls. The punch had restored to him his youthful vigor. He threw himself right and left among those who were dancing and those who were not; he passed like a whirlwind, like an avalanche, pushing here, overturning there, and bringing disorder everywhere. In vain they shouted to him—

"Stop, monsieur, stop, why don't you? You are throwing the ladies to the ground."

Cherami still went on; and only when his partner's turban had been detached from her head would he consent to deposit Aunt Merlin, whose eyes were starting out of her head, on a bench; but at this moment several gentlemen in a high state of indignation surrounded the terrible galoper, saying to him,—

“Monsieur, you have thrown my partner to the ground.”

“Monsieur, you have scratched my daughter’s nose.”

“Monsieur, you have overturned my wife in the most indecent fashion.”

“Monsieur, you will give me satisfaction for it.”

“Monsieur, it cannot be passed over thus.”

Amidst these provocations from all sides, Cherami calmly wiped away the perspiration which was pouring down his face and remarked,—

“Confound it, what is the matter with them all? How delightful! I think it all perfectly charming. You should keep out of the way. That was what I did when you bumped into me, waltzing, just now. Is it my fault that you don’t know how to keep on your legs? Is it any great misfortune that mademoiselle, your daughter’s nose is a little scratched, or that your wife, monsieur, has disclosed a pair of admirable ankles. It seems to me that you ought to be flattered at that accident, which must make everybody envy your happiness.”

These answers were far from appeasing the anger of the husbands, brothers and fathers who were injured through the objects of their affections; but uncle Blanquette advanced, he pierced the crowd, approached the one who had caused all the disorder, and said to him, assuming a tone which he endeavored to render severe,—

"Monsieur, you have caused serious perturbation at my nephew's wedding."

"Ha! that word perturbation is pretty. I shall remember that. That's all right. Continue, Papa Blanquette."

"Monsieur, it is not customary in our society, to allow one's self to dance in such an unconventional manner as you have been doing."

"It seems to me, however, that Aunt Merlin took to that dance quite readily."

"Monsieur, I did not invite you to come to our ball; I think it altogether too—altogether too—"

"Unceremonious—the word doesn't come to you; it must be that, though."

"Yes, monsieur, too unceremonious for anybody to present himself where he is not invited, particularly in such negligent attire as yours. You have thrown enough people to the ground as it is, and we have no desire for any more of it, and I beg you to retire."

"So that's your politeness, is it? Well, good evening, I am going. Your wedding isn't so choice, after all; I haven't seen a single glass of punch passed. And you think you have good form. Thank you, you are deucedly behind here, that is all."

"Monsieur, will you remember also that you owe me four hundred and ninety-five francs, and that, if you don't make an end of this, I shall resort to severe measures."

“Bravo, I was waiting for that; that puts the cap on it. To talk about his accounts at a ball. Why, old Blanquette, you make me sorry for you. ‘Good-by, Rome, I leave you!’ Ladies, I lay my homage at your feet. I am sorry to have jostled you a little, but it was really the fault of your cavaliers, who do not know how to hold you.”

This new insult addressed to the gentlemen of the wedding made the latter furiously angry; they wanted to fall on Cherami. The latter took off his yellow glove and threw it before them, saying,—

“This is all I can do for you. I will wait for you all at my place to-morrow morning. My friend Blanquette of veal will give you my address. Have pistols, sabres, swords; I shall have a rabbit’s tail, do you understand? And with that rabbit’s tail I defy you all!”

This heroic defiance seemed to calm the anger of the gentlemen a little. But while they were looking at him, a little bald gentleman darted at the glove and picked it up, exclaiming,—

“It is my glove, I recognize it. It is the left glove I had lost, it had a split in the thumb, it is surely the one.”

Cherami did not listen to M. Courbichon, he had already left the ballroom. He crossed the one where they were playing cards without stopping; there, taking down a hat from a peg and seizing a cane that was in a corner, he left

the last room and descended the staircase, saying,—

“A fig for them all! I am not sorry I went to the wedding; I have caught my hare.” So saying, Cherami tapped on the pocket in which were the gold pieces he had won at *écarté*. However, Cherami observed that at the foot of the stairs several people had stopped, waiting for their carriages; these were the guests of the wedding on the first floor, who were leaving the ball. Presently a young couple came and one of the ladies who was waiting, said to her neighbor,—

“What, is the bride going already?”

“Yes, it seems she feels rather indisposed.”

“Oh, is it the bride who is going so soon?” cried Cherami, thrusting his head forward.

“Why, yes, it is she—it is the perfidious Fanny, I recognize her.”

Hardly were these words pronounced when the bridegroom, who had his bride on his arm, abruptly left her, looked around him and came running up to Cherami, to whom he said, in a voice shaken by emotion,—

“Was it you who just spoke, monsieur?”

“What do you mean? What next? Well, yes, I did speak; have I not the right to do so?”

“You said, ‘It is the perfidious Fanny?’”

“Yes, by Jove! I never deny my words!”

“Monsieur, this is neither the hour nor the moment for an explanation; but to-morrow I

will seek you and if you are not a coward you will give me satisfaction."

"A coward! I! Arthur Cherami a coward. Well, that's a good one! and I have defied the whole Blanquette wedding. I'll fight with anything you like—from a pin to a cannon! I am your man."

"That we shall see to-morrow. What is your address?"

"Here it is. I always carry it with me for just such occasions as this," drawled Cherami, affectedly.

Auguste Monleard hastily took the dirty yellow card that Cherami drew from his pocket and ran to rejoin his wife, who had already got into the carriage. This little scene had passed so rapidly that the curious persons who were waiting about had been unable to catch more than a word or two.

The carriage which held the newly married couple having departed, Cherami looked about him for a cab; he was at length successful in discovering one and got into it, shouting at the top of his voice to the cabman,—

"Drive to the Rue de l'Orillon, Barrière de Belleville. I will stop you in front of my hotel when we come to it."

Then he spread himself out delightedly on the back seat, placing his feet on the front one, and said to himself,—

“A thoroughly good day’s work; an excellent dinner, some first rate punch, a goodly sum won at play, a ball and a duel! And this morning I had not even what would purchase a penny roll. In my place an idiot would have thrown himself into the water. But men of wit can always manage to find some other resource.”

CHAPTER VI

A FURNISHED APARTMENT HOUSE IN THE RUE DE L'ORILLON

THE Rue de l'Orillon, which is situated in the outskirts of Paris, in the immediate vicinity of the Belleville theatre, bears not the very smallest resemblance to the Rue de Rivoli, nor even to the Rue de la Paix. One may find mud in the aforementioned street at nearly every season, and if one is desirous of shopping, one will find very few shops in the style of the stores of the Prophète; I think I might even venture to affirm that there are none there. This at least was the condition of that neighborhood at the time of our story.

In a wretched lodging house in this street extra muros was the brilliant Arthur—after having lived in the Champs Elysées and the Chaussée d'Antin—reduced to lodge. What is more, he was scarcely ever able to pay his rent; however, on those days on which he received his income he sometimes decided to give a few five-franc pieces to his landlady, and the latter waited patiently for the weeks in arrear, because she was proud of having in her cheap lodging-house a man who

had had thirty-five thousand francs income, and who in his manners and language still preserved the aroma of his first position.

The room in which Arthur lived was not furnished like those in the Hotel du Louvre in Paris. A cheap paper with a blue background, at thirteen sous a roll, took the place of tinted walls; but in several places this paper, which was old, had been torn; such accidents had been hidden by new pieces of paper of another pattern, and often of another color, which gave the room a certain harlequin look which was not disagreeable—above all to those who like fancy costumes. But in the Rue de l'Orillon they adore harlequins.

A wretched bed, surmounted by a pole which had never been gilt, and on which was hung a yellow linen curtain much too narrow to surround the bed, was opposite the window. At the foot of this bed a screen four feet high was supposed to shield it from the draught which came under the ill-joined door. A Louis XVI commode, an old Louis XV sofa, and a desk which was supposed to date from Louis XIII, with the addition of a few chairs, composed the whole of the furnishings. On the chimneypiece were two candlesticks, a little box of pipe lights and some cigar ashes, but not a single pipe. Arthur would have felt himself dishonored had he approached a pipe to his lips.

It was noon and Cherami was lying in his bed,

only just awake. He stretched his arm, rubbed his eyes, turned and turned again, and looking towards the window, he said to himself,—

“Come, I think I have slept passably well. Yes, if I may judge from the sun, which is shining full into my window, the morning must be advanced. It is often inconvenient not to have a watch; but in a furnished lodging house, they should at least have clocks, if only a small one on each mantelpiece. That thief of a Madame Louchard, my landlady, promises me every month to furnish me with that indispensable article. But I am like sister Anne, I see nothing coming. By all the powers, as they say in Marivaux’s plays, my rest has done me good, for I did a very tiring day’s work yesterday. Why, it seems to me I had at least a dozen duels for this morning. Devil take it, and I don’t know what time it is.”

Cherami began to rap loudly on the frail wall at the head of his bed, and to shout at the top of his voice,—

“Madame Louchard! Hallo there! hi! Goddess of a Cythera! love of a landlady! Venus of the tea gardens! hasten to me, I pray thee. ‘Come lovely dame, I wait—I wait for thee!’ Confounded jade, bestir yourself down there.”

After five minutes or so heavy steps were heard on the staircase, and a big tall woman, as thin as a lath, whose scant draperies betrayed the deepest disdain for all kinds of crinoline, came into

Cherami's room. This woman had a big nose, a big mouth, big teeth, big ears, and feet and hands in the same proportions; a child who had heard the story of little Red Riding Hood would have been afraid of this woman, and would have taken her for the counterpart of the wolf disguised as the grandmother. Let us add, to complete the portrait, that Madame Louchard had a yellow complexion, cross eyes and a nose that was always smeared with snuff; that her costume consisted of a long wrapper, which looked for all the world like an umbrella case, recalling the fashions under the Directorate; and that her headdress was composed of a dirty cap which had once been white, over which was tied a ragged handkerchief of colored cotton.

"Well, what's the matter now? Why are you making yourself hoarse by shouting in that absurd fashion? Why don't you get up, M. Lazyman? It seems to me it's quite late enough for anybody."

It was in these terms and with a hoarse raucous voice that this lady wished her distinguished lodger good morning.

"You are, as usual, right on that point, Queen of Cythera," answered Cherami, half rising on his elbow in the bed.

"Well now, God forgive me," said the woman, "I verily believe he is going to get up and dress himself before me."

Was it to let me see you get out of bed that you called me? I think that is rather a broad joke."

"Why no, virtuous Louchard, I am not going to get up before you; I am aware of the strictness of your morals, and I respect them. I am conscious that Richelieu and Buckingham would have lost their time with you."

"I don't know those gentlemen, but I don't care any more for them than for any others! I have told you a hundred times that since the death of my husband, the late Louchard, men are nothing to me."

"It seems that the late Louchard was a phoenix, a jewel, a pearl among husbands."

"On the contrary, there were a thousand hidden disagreeable things about him, and he was always tipsy. That is what made me take such a dislike to your sex on the whole, so far as love is concerned."

"Well, upon my word of honor, I approve of you; I think you have done well to take that tone."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because it gives you a resemblance to Dido. But let us drop all that, and tell me quickly what time it is?"

"Mercy, it is a good half hour—yes, at least—since I heard it strike twelve."

"Why don't you tell me at once it is half past twelve? I have been confoundedly lazy, in fact;

but when I came in last night it was at least two o'clock in the morning."

"Even then you woke me up; you always make so much noise on the staircase."

"Well, at all events, I didn't awaken your porter, since you haven't one."

"What would be the use of one? Everybody knows the secret of the alleyway, and they can come in when they like."

"Groping their way in the dark, which is very imprudent."

"But it seems to me that you came home in a vehicle last night. Do the omnibuses run so late now?"

"The omnibus! I would have you know, Widow Louchard, that when I come home after midnight, I always have a cab or a carriage."

"Hang it, the funds are high, then? You must give me something on account."

"Don't bother me about that. I have given you another ten francs."

"That was two months back."

"That isn't the question. Have any individuals come to ask for me this morning?"

"No, not even a cat."

"Not even a cat! Oh, the cowards!"

"How can you say that cats are cowards? Mine will fight with a dog."

"It is not a question of your cat, worthy Louchard, but of a lot of blusterers who defied

me yesterday, and who haven't dared to come in search of me this morning."

"Do you want to fight again, by chance? The idea! why it is a mania with you. It is not so very long that you have recovered from that ball in the side."

"Pshaw! a trifle, a mere scratch. I am not quarrelsome, but when anyone looks at me cross ways it vexes me. After all, I care little about seeing those insignificant fellows who were at the Blanquette wedding again; but there is another gentleman whom I should be surprised not to see. However, he has not lost much time yet. He was married yesterday, and one doesn't rise very early in the day after his wedding."

"What, you want to fight with some one who was married yesterday?"

"Why not? People marry and fight, and kill or are killed. Such is life, beautiful Artemisia."

"What makes you call me Artemisia? that is not my name."

"Because she was a widow who infinitely regretted her husband."

"I have never regretted mine for one moment, quite the contrary."

"That has nothing to do with it. You say, then, that it is half past twelve. Deuce take it, Madame Louchard, when is that clock coming that you promised me this long time past?"

"I am looking out for one; I am looking for one that will go with the rest of the furniture."

"Then, my ducky, as I have here a desk which is said to be Louis XIII, a Louis XV sofa, and a Louis XVI commode, it seems to me that you cannot do otherwise than to buy a Louis XIV clock to fill in the interregnum and re-establish the connection of the dynasties."

"Yes, yes, I have seen exactly the thing, a little clock of the time of Pompadour."

"Take care, you are going too far. I did not say Pompadour, which means the same thing as Louis XV. I told you Louis XIV."

"Fourteen or fifteen, what does it matter, provided that it be not too dear. Why, when I said you were in funds, I was not mistaken. You have treated yourself to a new hat. After all, you did well to get one, for yours would not have kept your head dry in a storm."

"A new hat! What are you talking about, beautiful hostess? I have thought of getting one more than once, but I have not yet realized that project."

"Come, what do you call this?"

"Madame Louchard took up a hat that was placed on the commode and brought it to Cherami, who looked at it with all his eyes, for the hat was indeed quite new and of a fashionable shape."

"What the devil, is this my hat? It surprises me, it is quite changed, for the better too. It is

grown younger by at least two years, and it fits me. By Jove, it fits me perfectly, it is exactly the oval of my head."

"You bought it yesterday, no doubt."

"Why, no, once more I did not buy it. Why, now I know. On leaving the wedding ball I was a little put out, quite angry in fact; I seized the first hat that came to my hand, thinking it was mine."

"Well, it must be confessed that you have a lucky hand. You have not lost by the change."

"Oh, by Jove, these mistakes happen so often at a ball or party, that to speak frankly I shall not reclaim my own."

"It is quite as well that you shouldn't; but the person who has only found your hat in place of his own, may very likely come to reclaim his."

"Oh, well, let him come, I'll wait for him. I'll give him back his tile and a few others with it."

"All right, but that is not all."

"Well, what is the matter now, Widow Louchard? did I come back with two hats? I confess that that would astonish me."

"No, there is no further question of a hat; but this cane? This is not your stick, which was only fit to beat coats, and worth about six sous."

Madame Louchard picked up a cane which was lying in the corner of the room. It was a real rattan, ornamented with an agate head surrounded by rings of gold and carved in a very

original fashion. She presented it to Cherami, who uttered an exclamation of admiration.

"Well, this is pretty! Charming cane, in very good taste, not too heavy. This kind of cameo for a knob is exactly what I like."

"You have done the same about your cane as about your hat."

"Why, by Jove! it comes from the same source. It was placed beside the hat. I had placed my stick beside my plug, and the exchange has been complete."

"Well, it must be confessed that you are fortunate in your exchanges. It must have cost a pretty penny, this must."

"Oh, I have had far finer ones than this formerly. What the devil are you looking for on the ground and under the furniture, Madame Louchard?"

"Mercy! I was looking to see if you had not brought home some other object by mistake."

Cherami suddenly sat up, exclaiming,—

"Thunder of Jupiter! Widow Louchard, what do you take me for? Do you take me for a thief, a robber? I had a hat and a cane, and on leaving the ball I took a hat and a cane. They were not the objects I had taken there. I made an error which might happen to anybody—'errare humanum est', do you understand? No, you don't understand, but to bring away an object to which I have not the slightest right, fie for

shame! In proof that I would not do such a thing, I found a glove and I returned it. Learn, madame, that one may be without money, have debts, borrow and never return, gamble even on his word—for if I had lost yesterday I should not have been able to pay immediately—but all that does not prevent one from being a gallant man.”

“Good heavens, Monsieur Cherami, I didn’t say any different. You boil over all at once, like milk soup.”

“Yesterday, I confess, I had dined very well. I was not tipsy; I never get tipsy. I was only a little stupid, which perfectly explains all these mistakes, and now I feel that I must take something.”

“Would you like me to make you some onion soup while you are getting up? There’s nothing that restores one better the day after a bout than that.”

“Onion soup! I don’t despise that pottage; however, I have a great desire to carry my views further than that, and I was thinking of a good fowl. But what is that noise? It seems to me a cab is stopping in front of your hotel. Go and see what it is, my dear hostess.”

Madame Louchard went to the window and answered, “Yes, it really is a fine private cabriolet with a handsome dapple-gray horse, and a groom in livery, and now a young dandy is

alighting; he is looking at the house, he is coming in here, it really is for me."

"For you? Why no, it is for me, by all the devils! It must be my young husband, and I still in bed. I'll dress myself in a brace of shakes."

Cherami jumped down from his bed in his shirt. Immediately Madame Louchard took to her heels, exclaiming,—

"I don't like such ways, Monsieur Cherami, I have told you already not to get up before me—"

"Oh, my dear hostess, you must have risked a glance. Oh, you women, you are all descended from Lot's wife. It is a pity that you do not still change into salt at each of your indiscretions, which would famously lower the price of that article."

It really was, in fact, M. Monleard who had alighted from his cabriolet, and, after examining the exterior of the furnished lodging-house, had decided to venture into the rather gloomy alley of this house. There he vainly sought a porter, but the landlady performed that office herself, and she it was who hastened down.

"Madame, do you know if there is a certain M. Cherami in this house?"

"Yes, monsieur, yes, I know him, since he is my tenant."

"Oh, very well, will you tell me where he lives?"

"On the second floor, second door to the right."

"Do you think I shall find him in?"

"Certainly, monsieur; for I have just left him and he is only now getting up."

"Thank you, ah, excuse me, madame, just a few words more if you please."

"As many as you like, sir, I am in no hurry."

"Madame, I should like very much to have some information in regard to this gentleman? Do you know who he is? and what he does?"

"Good heavens, it won't take very long to tell you that. He does nothing, he lives on his income; he is a man who has been very rich, and who has done like many others, wasted his fortune with rakes; now he's obliged to go slow, for I believe his income is very small."

"Infinitely obliged, madame."

Monleard left Madame Louchard and went up to Cherami. The latter was in the act of dressing behind his screen, but as the screen hardly reached to his shoulders, he saw perfectly the person who came into his room, and could very well enter into conversation above the leaves of the article with which he was surrounded.

"Monsieur Arthur Cherami?" said the dandified young man, as he came into the room.

"Present! Here I am, monsieur. A thousand pardons that you should find me still dressing, but it will only be the matter of a minute. Will you, while waiting, take the trouble to seat yourself?"

"Thank you, I am not tired."

"Then remain standing. It is just as it pleases you. Where the devil have I put my collar?"

"Monsieur, you can guess, I believe, the motive which has brought me here."

"What, I can guess it? Why I was patiently expecting you, only I said to myself, 'this gentleman will not come early, because the first night of his wedding'—well it is needless that I should say anything further on that subject."

"Monsieur, I thought that our duel might take place without witnesses, the motive of it is so delicate. There are some things which one does not like to have noised abroad; for the world which is generally evil sometimes makes a mountain of that which is only—"

"A molehill. I am entirely of your opinion. Oh, I have my collar."

"Then, monsieur, you are quite willing that we should fight having no witness but my servant."

"Very willing. I have already done the like more than once."

"Monsieur, as it is unlikely that you will have weapons in your room, I brought a pair of swords and of pistols in my cabriolet."

"You did quite right, for, as you have foreseen, I am without weapons for the time being. I possessed very fine ones formerly. I had some of Devisme's pistols. I would have killed a fly for you

at fifty paces, but what does it matter? 'Deus dederat, Deus abstulit.' I'll just put on my coat and I'll be with you."

"What a singular personage," said Auguste Monleard, to himself, as he listened to Cherami.

The Latin with which he had seasoned his speech, and his easy manners, had already modified the opinion which Monleard had formed of him, and the latter was not sorry to learn that he was to fight with a man who was not destitute of good breeding or without education.

Arthur came from behind his screen and greeted his adversary with all the ease of a man of the world, saying to him,—

"Here I am, at your orders."

"Very well, monsieur, tell me, for no doubt you know this neighborhood, the lay of the land here? To me it is quite strange. Where can we conveniently fight near here without travelling two leagues to get to Vincennes or the Bois de Boulogne?"

"Wait until I think. Let me see, we might as well go under the Butts Saint-Chaumont; there are racecourses there, we shall not be seen, but it is rather difficult to get there in a carriage, and then, it is a bad neighborhood and there are sometimes rather queer rascals about; but hang it, without going to look so far, we have what we want quite near here. In the next street there is a large piece of vacant land, where one could

fight but where they never have fought before. Nobody passes in this neighborhood, we shall be exactly as if we were at home."

"And can one get on to this land?"

"Certainly, that fronting on the street is closed only by planks, but there is a gate there, and if anyone is about, we can say we are architects and that will be as easy as possible."

"And it's not far from here?"

"In five minutes we shall be there."

"In that case, monsieur, let us start. We can have my cabriolet follow us."

"The very thing, and as we must avoid making a noise, and by that means attracting attention, if you are quite willing, we will fight with the sword."

"Very willingly, monsieur."

Auguste Monleard went downstairs with Cherami. Madame Louchard, who was standing at the door of the alley to the house, was very curious at seeing her lodger go out with the elegant owner of the cabriolet. These gentlemen, instead of turning towards the Belleville highway took a road which led them behind the theatre of this suburb.

As he walked a few steps behind the person with whom he was going to fight, the young man was more and more astonished to find that his adversary possessed courteous manners, and a pronunciation which showed he was accustomed to good society.

"Monsieur, we are going to fight. That is an understood thing, upon which neither you nor I have any intention of changing, I am sure!"

"That is my opinion also, monsieur."

"But before fighting, will you not oblige me by telling me what you know of the person I have married, and since when you have known her?"

"I shall really be pleased to answer you. Learn therefore, that I do not know madame, your wife, at all, and that I saw her yesterday for the first time. In the first place, when she was alighting from the carriage on arriving at the Deffieux restaurant; then again, when you were taking her away that night, and I met you."

"But then, monsieur, can you explain to me those words which escaped you? 'Here is the perfidious Fanny?' Was it a wager? or was it a mistake? And, then, how did you know my wife's baptismal name, since you do not know her?"

"By Jove, my dear monsieur, I can explain all that to you in a very few words, and you will see that events ran their course quite naturally. When your young wife was alighting from her equipage, there was beside me, in front of the restaurant, a young man. A very pleasing young fellow, by Jove, but totally unknown to me. However, the poor youth made me feel quite sorry for him. He was so grieved, so desperate; tearing his hair—no he did not go so far as that; but what was worse than that, he wanted

to run towards the bride and make a scene. I put myself in front of him and prevented him from doing so, impressing upon him the fact that it would be very bad taste to cause such a scandal in the street."

"I thank you, monsieur. But this young man's name, do you know it?"

"He told it to me when we were dining, for we dined together, and it was then he related to me the story of his love. I must hasten to add that there was nothing in all this that in any way attainted your wife's honor, only she had allowed this poor fellow to pay court to her, she had flattered his hope of one day being her husband. But when you presented yourself, the balance had quickly turned in your favor, and my poor lover had been dismissed."

"Then the one who told you all that must be M. Gustave Darlemont?"

"Precisely, those are his names."

"Yes, I remember having sometimes met this young man at M. Gerbault's in the beginning of my relations with that family. You must confess, monsieur, you who seem to know the world and its usages, that it was at least indiscreet of a young man who had been welcomed into an honorable family, to thus relate the story of his love and of his frustrated hopes, in fact, all his business to some one whom he did not know, and whom he had met in the street."

"It was perhaps rather heedless, I confess, but we must excuse some follies in lovers. Poor Gustave adored your wife; he still adores her. She has rather played the coquette with him."

"Monsieur!"

"Oh, by Jove, all women are coquettish, I am well aware of that; whether they are girls, married women, or widows, before, during, or after, they are always coquettish. It is their original sin. Eve set them the example when she coquetted with the serpent. To attempt to correct this fault, would be to attempt an impossible thing, for woman is made thus. '*Quid levius pluma? pulvis! Quid pulver e? ventus! Quid vento? mulier! Quid muliere? nihil!*'"

"But, monsieur, how comes it that it was you and not that M. Gustave who uttered that offensive exclamation?"

"For a very simple reason,—Gustave was no longer there. After dining with me at the same restaurant, where you were having your wedding feast, for he insisted on speaking to your wife to bid her a last adieu—"

"The impertinent fellow! had he dared—"

"Oh, by Jove, you wouldn't have known it; women do so many things that we don't know of. But a certain uncle arrived, not at all a jocular person, and one who looked as if he were not always pleasant. The latter led away his nephew without listening to his prayers and lamentations,

and poor Gustave was obliged to leave without again seeing his perfidious Fanny. Pardon me, but it was always thus that he expressed himself in speaking of madame, your wife, and that is why that exclamation escaped me that night when I saw her on your arm. You are in possession of all the facts, and by Jove, we have arrived. Wait, here are the planks which surround the vacant land. We can get in here, where there is a break in the continuity. Not a cat either inside or outside, that is delightful! You can ask your servant for the swords."

Monleard had the swords handed to him, ordered his groom to remain near the cabriolet, and with Cherami went on to a piece of ground laid out for building on which there was nothing but a few stones. These gentlemen presently stopped at a place where there was nothing to obstruct them; put their coats down, and placed themselves on guard. From the manner in which Cherami held himself, the young dandy saw immediately that he had to do with a good swordsman, and as he himself was an adept in the use of the sword, he was not sorry to meet an adversary worthy of measuring blades with him.

But after some passes, several attacks lightly parried, Monleard perceived that he had before him an exceedingly skilled antagonist and that he would have to redouble his efforts and employ all his skill and strength in the struggle in order

to gain any advantage. He had believed that in a few bouts he would have done with his adversary, and his self-respect was piqued at being obliged to defend himself. He attacked with an impetuosity which sometimes made him forget prudence, and Cherami, who fought with the same coolness with which he would have played shuttlecock, said to him, from time to time,—

“Take care, your play is faulty. You’ll get yourself pricked. You lunge too often. I warn you that it will not be my fault. Ah, that’s just what I said.”

In fact Auguste Monleard, in attacking unguardedly, had received his adversary’s sword in his arm, and the wound was sufficiently serious to make him drop his weapon from his hand.

“Come, I am vanquished,” said the young man, forcing himself to master his sufferings, “but then, monsieur, you are a very skilful swordsman.”

“Yes, I can fence a little. Wait, I am going to take your handkerchief from your pocket and bind your wound to stop the blood; then, with your black silk scarf, we will put your arm into a sling.”

“Infinitely obliged, monsieur, and I beg a thousand pardons for the trouble I am giving you.”

“Why, between men of honor, it is always managed thus. The combat ended, they give each other their hands. It is vexatious that the

sword pierced so deep, we would have breakfasted together."

"Oh, I confess it would be impossible for me to do that."

"Yes, so I should conceive. Oh, you are in for it for a fortnight, perhaps for three weeks. There are a lot of muscles in the arm which are restive and devilishly hard to cure. Have you the strength to reach your cabriolet? Would you like me to call your groom?"

"Oh, it is needless, with your help I can walk."

"Take my arm, and don't be afraid of leaning on it."

Monleard managed, though suffering a good deal, to reach his cabriolet, into which Cherami helped him to mount, after having placed the swords in it.

Then, bowing to his adversary, who again thanked him, Cherami left him saying,—

"Delighted to have had the pleasure of your acquaintance."

CHAPTER VII

A DRAWING-ROOM IN THE CHAUSSÉE D'ANTIN

EXACTLY three weeks after Mademoiselle Fanny Gerbault's marriage to the brilliant Auguste Monleard, which as the reader will remember took place at the Deffieux restaurant, there was gathered in a very handsome drawing-room in a house in the Rue Neuve-des-Mathurins, toward nine o'clock in the evening, a rather numerous company, among whom we shall certainly find one or more persons of our acquaintance if we look for them.

In the first place, the young woman seated on a sofa in front of an elegant Chinese lacquered table, who was rather negligently occupied with some woolwork, was the newly-wedded bride, Fanny, now Madame Monleard, in a charming home toilet of the kind worn when one receives only intimates; she wore nothing on her head but her hair, which was very tastefully arranged, and the thick shining masses of which, plaited at the back, were drawn round her head and formed a coronet.

Marriage had not lessened the beauty of the young woman; her complexion was as fresh as a

rose, her eyes shone with the liveliest expression, and on her lips was a smile of satisfaction and almost of beatitude except, however, when she turned her glances on a newspaper which was spread on the table in such a manner as to allow the transactions at the Bourse and the different industrial valuations to be seen. Then her forehead would slightly wrinkle and her lips become slightly compressed; but this expression of anger soon disappeared, the pleasing Fanny would glance around her, then her physiognomy would resume its amiable and happy expression.

A little further off, near a piano, another young woman was engaged in turning over the leaves of some music books. The latter was Adolphine, Fanny's sister. You know already that her hair was not so dark as that of her sister, that her eyes were not so large, which however, did not prevent her from being a charming person; there was above all an expression of sweetness and melancholy in her countenance which attracted and always awakened interest. A little taller than her sister, Adolphine had a slight, elegant figure; her walk was always graceful; pretty women have this in common with cats, that in their slightest movements, there is an inexplicable charm which is very attractive. They are not the most coquetish who possess this charm, but rather those to whom grace is quite a natural thing.

For some time past Adolphine's melancholy

had almost developed into sadness. Her looks were often turned towards the ground and she remained plunged in a revery which could not have been provoked by happy memories, to judge by the expression of her face. Suddenly she would rouse herself from her reflections, and, as if ashamed of having abandoned herself to her thoughts, would glance keenly around her, fearing that she had been noticed. Then she would try to assume a smiling countenance to hide that which occupied her heart; but then, even her smile was never quite true and her cheerfulness was like her smile.

Opposite the piano was a card table at which four persons were playing the inevitable whist. There was in the first place a lady who must have been on the other side of forty, who had been very pretty, and who, in the lamplight still produced a dazzling effect, thanks to an extremely careful toilet, in which she must have employed all those precious cosmetics which infallibly prevent a lady from ever appearing old.

Madame Mirallon, that was the name of this person, had moreover diamonds of great price on her neck and ears, but those who assert that these gems embellish a woman are completely deceived; it is necessary to say simply that they enrich them; and this would be a case of recalling the saying of Apelles, "Whom the gods make rich, they do not make handsome."

This lady had as a neighbor on the right a gentleman of fifty years, the bearer of a distinguished and witty countenance, rather cold and reserved, but exquisitely polite even when he insinuated into the conversation some brilliant remark; for he spoke little and preserved in his person and dress the most perfect accord with his age. This person was M. Clairval.

Then the fourth player, who happened to be the lady's partner, was a gentleman of some forty years of age, an insipid fair man with a pretentious manner and a foolish expression; a doll's face from which two big, very prominent eyes protruded, which he continually rolled as if in astonishment. This was his habitual expression. He bowed to everybody who spoke to him, found a way to pay compliments to everybody and accompanied the discourse with a honeyed smile that he preserved even when listening to you; all this will give you an idea of the person who called himself Batonnin.

Opposite this gentleman was a young man who was neither old nor ugly, but whose dress was extremely careful, and his hair worthy of figuring in the show window of an artistic hairdresser, the young elegant being adorned with a bush of fair hair which was marvellously adapted to all the inventions of a capillary artist. M. Anatole de Raincy, for so the young man was called, was playing cards, with straw-colored gloves which

perfectly fitted his very small hands, of which he seemed inordinately proud and which he kept always in evidence; add to this portrait a small light, chestnut mustache, a pince-nez and a continual lisping in his pronunciation.

Around the table and near the lady walked or rather hovered a dandy of sixty, who had the dress and manners of a young man; his face only persisted in disclosing his age, although its owner did all that was possible to mislead the curious. But his cheeks which were hollow because of the loss of his teeth, a very long nose which had acquired a certain rosiness at the tip, and several wrinkles which formed lines on his temples, did not allow his visage to delude people. As to his hair, this gentleman's was a very beautiful black, which proves that he wore a wig.

Such was M. le Comte de la Berinière, an old beau who possessed a very fine fortune, although he had spent a part of it in living the life of a prince and in assiduously courting the fair sex. M. de la Berinière's chief fault lay in believing himself still young and seductive, and, in consequence, he was still desirous of making conquests. For the rest, the descendant of a great house, and having all the manners of a nobleman, the comte, if he had not much wit, had at least the advantage of a cheerful and amiable disposition; it was easy to be seen that he wished only to see life from its attractive points of view. Also he was unmarried.

At this moment the comte, leaving the whist table, went to watch Madame Monleard at her woolwork.

"That is very pretty work you are doing there, fair lady, upon my word it is, but then you have talent for everything."

"Heavens! I don't know how to do it well yet."

"Is it a carpet you are making?"

"No, it is a cover for a footstool."

"Monleard is a happy fellow, he has married a treasure."

"You exaggerate, monsieur le comte."

"No, I only say what I think. Ah, if I had only known you sooner, I know well what I should have done, by Jove!"

"What a sigh. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Are you laughing to hear me sigh?"

"Why, what do you want me to do?"

"Ah, women are hard-hearted sometimes; but all the same, if I had known you before Monleard I should have begged that I might have had the honor of making you the Comtesse de la Berinière."

"Oh, what a good joke."

"Oh, I am not joking, but the fates were against it, and I repeat Monleard is a fortunate mortal. By the way, how is his arm getting on?"

"Very slowly; he cannot yet use it."

"It's taking a long while to heal, and they say that this accident happened the day after your marriage."

"Yes, the very next day."

"In falling on a staircase, I believe."

"Yes, he slipped and fell on his arm."

"Monsieur de la Berinière, please come here for a minute and advise my partner, M. Batonnin. Really for some moments past he has made mistake on mistake."

"It is the pleasure I experience in being your partner, madame, which probably causes me distraction," answered the little gentleman with the prominent eyes, bowing to his vis-à-vis.

"Then, monsieur, do me the pleasure, I beg of you, not to cut my kings again."

The comte left the young bride with regret, and returned to the whist table saying,—

"But, monsieur has no need of my advice. He plays very well indeed."

"Ah, you are too kind, monsieur."

"I am well aware that M. de la Berinière prefers paying his court to the ladies to watching the game," resumed Madame de Mirallon in what was meant to be a tone of raillery though a slight feeling of vexation showed through it; "but he can afford to spare us a few minutes."

"I will do anything that is agreeable to you, madame."

"Ah, it didn't suit you to join our game, however."

"Madame, will you kindly attend to your play."

"Oh, M. Clairval is so severe!"

"No, madame; but, ordinarily, whist is not played by talking."

"Good heavens, can't one speak a word? Ah, M. Batonnin, what you are doing there is hard-hearted. Don't you remember I gave the signal for trumps?"

"Madame, I beg your pardon, but it was impossible; if one holds nothing, one can play nothing."

"I don't understand proverbs."

"That means," exclaimed the comte laughing, "that monsieur did not have a spade."

"That makes no difference; the game required one to be played."

"Let's put our cards on the table and play an open game," resumed M. Clairval, "that will be more simple."

"I should like that very much; I have played like that with three persons and a dummy."

"Monsieur de Raincy, I might complain as well as madame; but I see that the evening is full of discussions."

"What have I done wrong now? I did not see—"

"Oh, I will tell you later on."

"I don't flatter myself that I am a first-class hand at whist."

"You are quite right not to do so."

"Well, M. Batonnin—well, I declare! what are you thinking of?"

"Madame, I thought you were cutting."

"We have lost the trick and it was your fault."

"We were bothered by—"

"Let's see, this is the rubber."

"Monsieur de la Berinière, stay, I beg of you, behind M. Batonnin. He won't listen to me, he has gone to pay his court to Mademoiselle Adolphine. What a butterfly that man is! When is he going to become settled?"

"It seems to me," said M. Clairval, smiling, "that it would be rather difficult for him to change his habits now."

The comte had, in fact, approached Adolphine, who still pretended to be occupied with some albums, and who did not seem to see what was going on around her.

"Are you fond of music, mademoiselle?"

"Oh! pardon me, yes, monsieur, very fond."

"Do you sing?"

"A little."

"The young ladies never do sing more than a little. I don't refer to you in saying this, mademoiselle, for they tell me that your voice is as sweet as it is correct."

"They flatter me, monsieur."

"Shall we have the pleasure of hearing you this evening?"

"I know nothing at all about that, monsieur; however, if my sister wishes me to do so—"

"Your sister will wish you to do so, I don't doubt, and everybody else also."

"Oh, the whist players will hardly care to hear singing."

"There is some reason in what you say; that game makes people barbarous, ferocious even, Those who are playing it will shut all the doors when music is going on in an adjoining room. I believe that if anyone were to tell them that the house was burning, they would want to finish their rubber before escaping."

"You quite see that I should be wrong to sing, then."

"Pardon me, I am not playing cards; and what does it matter to you if—"

"Monsieur de la Berinière, in the name of your ancestors, come and give M. Batonnin a little advice; it is highly necessary. We are playing the rubber and I don't want to lose through my partner's fault."

"That Madame de Mirallon is really terrible. As women grow old they gain in exactions what they lose in attractions. That, however, is no compensation to the men."

As he murmured this, the comte returned to place himself beside M. Batonnin, and Madame de Mirallon looked fixedly at him with a very marked intention,—

"One has a good deal of trouble in getting you to do anything now."

The word "now" made M. Clairval smile, and he said to his partner, "Come, M. de Raincy, we must take care what we are doing now. We are playing against three people."

Adolphine had risen. She went and seated herself beside her sister.

"I am sure, Fanny, you are bored because your husband does not come in."

"Me? Good heavens, I wasn't thinking of him at all. It is probably business that keeps him out of the room so long. You don't understand business, Adolphine. You don't know that in order to make a good deal of money it is sometimes necessary for a man to deprive himself of his pleasures."

"No, that is true, I understand nothing of money matters, but I should think that two newly married people could only be happy when they are together, and that they would be very much bored when they were separated one from the other."

"Oh, my darling, one has to be reasonable, and then people always have time to be together."

"However, when people marry for love, and M. Monleard seemed very much in love with you—can it be that he has already got over it?"

"Why, no; only, when once people are married they are no longer like two lovers. You will learn that one day, little sister. I still say, my little sister, though you are bigger than I."

"As for me, I could never love as calmly as you do. I should fear in your place that my husband bore rancor against me because of that duel."

"Auguste has too keen a mind and knows life too well to impute to me as a crime the folly and extravagance of another. I cannot help a man's having been in love with me."

"And poor Gustave, he loved you so deeply."

"I wonder at your pitying him after the manner in which he has conducted himself! To go and make his lamentations in the street, and to end by sending some one to fight a duel in his place. It is shameful!"

"Fanny, you judge Gustave wrongly. He did not offer your husband any provocation, and ought you to think that a crime? He would have done so probably if his uncle had not led him almost by force from the restaurant, where he absolutely insisted on speaking to you."

"How do you know all that?"

"Why it was I who sent to warn M. Grandcourt that his nephew was in the restaurant where they were holding the wedding."

"Yes, that's true, you told me of it. This gentleman wanted to make a scandal, and by what right? I wasn't obliged to marry him, was I?"

"You let him think that you loved him."

"Oh, come now, because one listens to the sweet nothings these gentlemen whisper to one,

because one smiles when they sigh, they imagine at once that they are adored. He offered me a fine position, didn't he? Three thousand francs income, a pretty thing."

"If you had really loved him, you would not have cared about more or less fortune."

"Oh, I'm not so romantic as you are. Auguste gives me a coupé quite at my orders, and I think that is very nice. I repeat to you, your M. Gustave is an idiot."

"Oh, Fanny, it's wrong for you to say that, to treat him thus, because he loved you sincerely."

"I am well rid of his love, and his conduct is not less reprehensible. What reason had he to send that big ungainly fellow to insult me as I left the ball, which naturally forced Auguste to fight a duel with the man."

"I would be willing to swear that M. Gustave did not tell the individual with whom he dined to address the slightest unpleasant word to you. Besides, M. Grandcourt took his nephew away long before you left the ball. This man who dared to make offensive remarks was tipsy, for he had already made scenes with some gentlemen. He absolutely insisted on giving his hand to the ladies when they arrived for the ball."

"Then, my darling, you must confess that your M. Gustave has some very ugly acquaintances."

Adolphine said nothing more. She sadly low-

ered her eyes. After a moment her sister resumed,—

“What surprises me is that since my marriage I have not once met M. Gustave. For a man so much in love, one would have thought he would come to see me at least once at my window. You see plainly, that he is already consoled.”

“Monsieur Gustave is not in Paris. His uncle made him leave for Spain on the day following your marriage.”

“Oh, he is in Spain. That’s different. But it seems to me you know all he is doing. How is that?”

“My father lately met M. Grandcourt, who told him that his nephew was in Spain.”

“Oh, some one has just rung the bell.”

“It’s your husband, no doubt.”

“If it is he, we shall soon see him.”

It was not the master of the house. It was M. Gerbault who came into the drawing-room and who as a good father began by kissing his daughters.

“Good evening, father,” said Fanny, “why did you not come to dinner with Adolphine? My husband wished you to.”

“My dear child, I could not. Adolphine should have told you that I had promised to dine with a gentleman from the provinces.”

“What a fine reason! You could have sent your gentleman from the provinces to dine alone.”

"No, a promise must be kept. But where is your husband?"

"He had a party to see this evening. He will be back presently."

"There, we have lost! I was sure that we should," exclaimed Madame de Mirallon. "Ah, M. Batonnin, I shall never forgive you for those six fishes."

"I am quite indemnified, madame, by the pleasure of having been your partner."

"Fortunately, here is M. Gerbault. He knows how to play. Come and join us, M. Gerbault."

"I shan't play again. Once I have played two rubbers I have had enough of it. It makes my head ache."

So saying, the well-gloved young man left the card table and approached the two sisters.

"Monsieur de Raincy, have you been at the Bourse to-day?"

"Certainly, madame, I go there every day."

"How are the stocks of the Orleans and Lyons railways?"

"Very good, madame."

"Do you think that they will go up again?"

"Why, yes, I think so. At least, they won't go down."

"That's rather vague, the way you put it."

"Oh, I never have a fixed opinion. One is often mistaken at the Bourse. But your husband can inform you better than I can. He is

always to be seen there, and it seems that he participates in big deals."

"Auguste? Yes, but he does not like me to ask him how affairs are going at the Bourse. He says that ladies should know nothing about that, that they ought to occupy themselves in spending money, not in making it."

"I rather think that is what the ladies usually do."

"But I think otherwise. Had I been a man I would have been a stockbroker."

"Do you think so? There are some of them who lose lots of money. Ah, here is that dear fellow Monleard."

Fanny's husband came in. He carried his right arm in a sling, was very pale and looked full of care, his glances were almost gloomy; however, when he found there was company in his drawing-room, he quickly resumed the amiable expression of the master of the house. Young De Raincy hastened to shake hands with him.

"Good evening, my dear fellow."

"Good evening, Anatole. How do you do, ladies and gentlemen?"

The Comte de la Berinière shook hands also with M. Monleard, exclaiming,—

"Ah, here is the happy mortal, the fortunate husband! I see it is still your left hand you have to offer."

"There is no help for it. I cannot yet use my right."

"How the devil came you to fall like that on the staircase? You must have been very careless. The day after your marriage, too. I'll wager you were running up to your wife."

"Exactly so," answered Auguste, glancing at Fanny, who only smiled without raising her eyes from her woolwork.

"I was sure of it. It was his devotion, his love for you, fair lady, that caused the accident. Your eyes are quite dangerous. But after all, since love lost Troy, it may easily make one slip on a staircase."

"Monsieur de la Berinière, come here a bit."

"What now? Decidedly Madame Mirallon has a grudge against me this evening. It's a conspiracy. She wants to monopolize me."

The comte, who had said these words in a low tone, resumed out loud,—

"Why, madame, it seems to me that you no longer have M. Batonnin for your partner. M. Gerbault has replaced him; you have nothing to complain of this time."

"Oh, what a hard-hearted man you are. I wanted to show you an extraordinary game."

"By Jove, she has shown me her game often enough," said the comte, turning towards young De Raincy. "I don't care to see any more of it." Auguste, after shaking hands with his father-in-law, and speaking to the different persons in the

room, went towards his wife and gave her a light tap on the cheek, as he said to her,—

“You are making some furniture covering for me now, are you? That is very nice.”

“Oh, furniture covers, that would take too long,” said Fanny, looking at her husband, as she would at a simple acquaintance. “This is for a foot-stool, that’s all.”

“But, by Jove! what are you doing with this paper spread before you?”

“I was looking to see how stocks are going, my dear.”

“That’s a very amusing occupation for a woman.”

So saying, Auguste took the newspaper, crushed it in his hand, and threw it into a corner of the drawing-room; Fanny watched him do it, then glanced at her sister, and said to her in a whisper,—

“Do you see, he doesn’t want me to look at Bourse matters at all. But I shall see another paper, that is all.”

“Do you suffer any further with your arm, brother?” said Adolphine, addressing Monleard, whose anxious expression she noticed.

“No, little sister, no. I thank you for being willing to trouble yourself about it. There are some persons who take much greater interest in industrial values, than in the wound that I have received—however—”

Monleard stopped as if he feared to say too

much, but Adolphine had quite understood the meaning of his words, and she whispered to her sister,—

“Your husband is vexed because you don’t ask after his wound.”

“Leave me alone, will you. As if I had not seen my husband before, to-day. I don’t imagine the state of his arm has changed in so short a time.”

“All the same, it is not nice of you to evince so little interest in him; for, after all, it was because of you that this duel took place.”

“Oh, I beg of you, Adolphine, don’t say such things to me. You set my nerves on edge. For some days past my husband has been in a very disagreeable temper, but as I cannot be the cause of it, I don’t let it put me out at all. I have not even seemed to see it.”

“In your place I should ask him the cause of it.”

“And I should be very sorry to do so. This gentleman is capricious, apparently! Well, so much the worse for him.”

“Mademoiselle, it seems to me that you promised to sing for us,” said M. de la Berinière, who again had escaped from Madame de Mirallon, and had hastened towards Adolphine.

“Indeed, monsieur le comte, I should be pleased to do so if it would be agreeable to you. But would it not disturb the whist?”

"Sing if you like," said M. Gerbault, "we can close our ears."

"Thank you, papa."

"Ah, here is a father who does not say what he thinks, surely."

While Adolphine was seating herself at the piano, young Anatole said to Monleard,—

"Is it true that Morissel has absconded?"

"Why, yes."

"Devil take it! and he carried off six hundred thousand francs they say."

"Thereabouts."

"You had business relations with him. You haven't lost anything by him, have you?"

"No, a mere trifle. Some thirty thousand francs."

"A trifle like that would bother me a good deal, but then I am not a capitalist, like you."

Auguste bit his lips and went and sat down near the piano. Adolphine sang a delightful ballad by Nadaud. Her voice was sweet and clear. In fact, it was a sympathetic voice, and what was more, the one who possessed it had acquired the habit of pronouncing plainly the words she said, which doubled the pleasure they experienced in hearing her. Auguste's forehead cleared a little. Young Anatole ceased to look at his hands. The comte seemed fascinated, and his eyes never left the singer. Finally, Madame de Mirallon exclaimed,—

"Monsieur Batonnin, it is your play. Will you pay attention to the game?"

"A thousand pardons, madame, but I was listening to the singing."

"We are not singing, monsieur."

"Thank God," murmured M. Clairval.

"What's that? What are you thanking God for, M. Clairval?"

"Because, if we were all singing, madame, we should not be able to hear mademoiselle."

"You see, I do really disturb the play," said Adolphine, stopping.

"Why no, please continue, mademoiselle. Does anyone ever sit at whist for two minutes together without speaking? You will be the pretext now, that is all."

Adolphine continued to sing. The game of whist being finished, Madame de Mirallon had lost again. She left the table angrily, exclaiming,—

"Really, I shall give up playing whist."

"Now do you know if there is a game I adore," said M. Gerbault, "it is bezique."

"Fie! a guardroom game."

"I don't know whether it is a guardroom game or not, but they play piquet also in guardrooms, which does not prevent its being a fine game! It has been said of lansquenet that it is a game for lackeys; they put écarté in the same denomination, which does not prevent these games from

being introduced into the drawing-room. To sum up, I think we should play at any game that amuses us, without disquieting ourselves as to its origin."

"I think so also. I am madly fond of bezique," exclaimed M. de la Berinière. "And if you will allow me, M. Gerbault, I shall be exceedingly pleased to go and have a game with you some evening."

"Whenever you like to come, monsieur le comte, you will be welcome, bezique or no bezique."

"It is a game of which I also am very fond," said M. Batonnin.

"As for me, I don't think I know it," said Anatole de Raincy.

"Well, gentlemen," said Fanny, "the next time we will establish a bezique table for amateurs. And you, Auguste, do you play it?"

"Me? What did you say? Play what?" asked Monleard, who was not listening to the conversation.

"Bezique!"

"No—oh, yes, I played it again yesterday."

"My son-in-law is absent-minded this evening," remarked M. Gerbault.

They talked for some moments more, then each one took leave of the newly-married couple; but as they went out Adolphine could not refrain from whispering to her sister,—

“If you would only be a little more affectionate to your husband, I assure you that he is grieving about something.”

Fanny answered, “And I assure you that it has nothing to do with me. Besides, must a woman always be uneasy because of the changes in her husband’s countenance? That would afford me little recreation.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVERIES OF A YOUNG GIRL. A HONEYED GENTLEMAN. A GAME

RATHER more than a fortnight had rolled by since the whist party at the Monleards', at which, as we know, Adolphine had sung several ballads, but her pretty voice had made a lively impression on the Comte de la Berinière's redoubtable heart, also on young Anatole de Raincy; it had even caused a flutter in M. Batonnin's breast on this occasion, that gentleman who played so badly at whist, but who, they said, understood business much better—that being, in fact, his vocation, since his position was that of an agent for business houses.

Adolphine was sitting alone in a pretty drawing-room, a much less elegant apartment than the one belonging to her sister, but which was still very comfortable and arranged with very good taste. Needless to say that there was a piano there. This has become an indispensable article of furniture in even the plainest of households. One even sees them in the lodges of ambitious porters who send their daughters to the Conservatoire.

Adolphine held a book in her hand, but she was not reading. She was dreaming, and her expression was still sad. What could this young girl of eighteen be dreaming of? Everybody will think that her heart was filled with a tender sentiment. However, no man had ever paid court to Adolphine as yet, nor had anyone ever seen near her some handsome bachelor, very impressive and assiduous in his attentions. But all love affairs have not the same beginnings. All do not follow the same beaten paths. There are those secret and discreet feelings which are quite unsuspected by those who inspire them, and when it is in the heart of a virtuous young girl that one of these deep passions springs up, she suffers more deeply because of the trouble she takes to hide it.

Adolphine passed her hand over her forehead, as if to scatter the thoughts which saddened her; she resumed her book, tried to read for some moments, then placed it beside her, saying,—

“It is useless for me to try to distract my thoughts, I cannot. Formerly, I was so fond of reading. This book, they say, is exceedingly interesting, but I don’t know what I’m reading. Nothing amuses me now, even music has lost its charm. My poor piano is neglected. Everything wearies me. Good heavens, shall I always be like this? Oh, no, that would be frightful. This will pass; it must pass. My father has

already several times noticed that I was sad and uneasy. He thinks that I am ill, but I can't tell him the cause of my disquietude; it is not my fault, I have done all that I could to take my thoughts from the memory of that person, and it always comes back. I know, of course, that it is out of all common sense, that I am utterly foolish, but reason as I may, I can't cure myself."

Somebody opened the drawing-room door. It was M. Gerbault. The young girl quickly wiped the tears from her eyes, and forced herself to assume a smiling expression as she went to meet her father.

"Adolphine, I came to warn you that we shall have two people to dinner to-day."

"Why, it's rather late to say that, father. But no matter, I'll go and warn Madeleine."

"I could not tell you sooner. It was only just now that I met M. Batonnin. He said to me, 'I will come this evening and have a game of bezique with you,' and I said to him, 'Come and dine without ceremony.'"

"Monsieur Batonnin? I don't much like that man."

"He is, however, very gallant, and extremely polite."

"He is always paying compliments—it is sickening; and then he is always smiling. Now papa, is that natural? Can everybody always be pleased, satisfied, in company?"

"It seems to me that would be difficult; however, there are some optimistic persons who take everything in good part."

"I fully believe, myself, that those people are not frank, and that they only study to hide what they think. Who is the other person, father?"

"It is M. Clairval."

"Oh, I like him very well indeed. He is not always paying compliments at least; though that does not prevent him from being pleasant. Better still, he has some wit and does not thrust it into everybody's face. Is there anything nicer than wit which does not show itself?"

"Why, my daughter, if one has wit and does not show it, it seems to me that it is exactly as if they did not have it."

"Oh, father, it always pierces through here and there, if it only be in a smile."

"I just missed inviting M. de Berinière also."

"Oh, papa, how fortunate it is that you did miss doing so."

"Why should you say that? The comte is very amiable. He is an exceedingly distinguished man in every way."

"I don't say that he isn't, but one has to stand on so much ceremony with a comte; and then he comes very often lately."

"And does that bore you?"

"It isn't very amusing."

"My darling, in inviting some friends to din-

ner, I hoped to cheer you up; to distract you a little. For some time back, you have looked as if you had something to trouble you. Are you ill?"

"Why, no, my dear father, I am not ill, and I have nothing to trouble me. I assure you that I feel quite as usual."

"Come, so much the better. I find you a little changed, however."

"Oh, you know there are some days—in the autumn—when—And didn't you invite my sister and her husband, while you were about it?"

"Yes, indeed, I was going to their house, when I happened to meet Auguste. They are going to a grand dinner. They are always going to parties and to brilliant gatherings."

"So much the better, that pleases my sister, she is so fond of that sort of thing."

"Yes, oh, Fanny is leading the life she dreamed of. She must be happy, but it has seemed to me for some time past that her husband is becoming morose in his temper. He always seems so bewildered, so preoccupied. When one speaks to him he hardly listens."

"I think you are mistaken, father; my sister's husband has not an expansive disposition. He appears cold and a little proud even; but he likes to shine, to dazzle people by his luxury, and that sometimes leads a man too far."

"What do you mean by that?"

"They assure me that he gambles too much at the Bourse."

"If he has the means to do so, that is all right. He must know what he is doing. Batonnin was telling me, just now, that Monleard must have lost a good deal of money by the failure or the absconding—I do not know exactly which—of a certain Morissel."

"Ah, M. Batonnin has told you that? I notice that disagreeable news is always brought to us by smiling lips and honeyed speech."

"I should be pleased to think that my son-in-law's fortune had not suffered such a grievous check."

"Besides, father, in business one cannot always make money, can one?"

"Come, here you are talking almost as wisely as your sister. Oh, I also met M. Grandcourt."

"Monsieur Grandcourt?"

"Well, what is the matter with you now, that you should turn so pale? Do you feel ill?"

"No, father, I assure you that there is nothing the matter with me. And what did M. Grandcourt say to you?"

"Oh, the latter does not gamble at the Bourse, he is a prudent, intelligent man. He does an excellent business. His house is prospering and becoming more extensive every day."

"And his nephew, that poor M. Gustave, did he tell you anything about him?"

"He is still in Spain."

"But when he comes back, if he should come to see us, would you be displeased at that?"

"My dear Adolphine, in the first place, after what has passed, it is not probable that Gustave would ever come again to our house. This young man was in love with your sister. He hoped for a time that she would accept him as her husband. Then he saw his hopes blighted. He saw that Fanny preferred Monleard, and he suffered doubly, in his love and in his self-respect. How can you imagine that he will come to us to reawaken his memories and his regrets? No, our company cannot offer him the slightest charm."

"Do you think, father, that our society would no longer be agreeable to him? He used to be very fond of you too."

"In me he loved the father of the young lady whom he desired to marry. We know that."

"But if he should present himself here—it seems to me it would be very unkind to send him away, or to receive him ill."

"Without receiving him ill, you should know perfectly well how to make him understand that his presence here might be embarrassing; that he might meet your sister and her husband here; that the latter may be aware of his love for Fanny; and that it would be much better that he should come here no more. But, once again,

you will not have to tell him all that, for I am quite sure that the young man has no intention of coming here again."

"Poor Gustave," said Adolphine to herself, on leaving her father. "To be unwilling that he should come here! and how would it be if my father knew about this duel? That would surely have made him say, 'I don't want to see this young man in my house again.' Fortunately he thought, like everybody else, that Auguste's wound was the result of a fall on a staircase; but no doubt my father is right, and Gustave will never come back here. I shall not see him again."

The young girl put her handkerchief to her eyes, then went to find Madeleine, her servant, a young girl from Picardy, who did not know Gustave, because she had not come to live at M. Gerbault's until after the marriage of his eldest daughter. Madeleine was very fond of her mistress. She easily saw when the latter was sad, and often said to her,—

"Good heavens, mamzelle, when am I going to see you look cheerful and happy, as one ought to be at your age?"

"Why, I am very happy," said Adolphine, stifling a sigh.

The servant shrugged her shoulders as she muttered,—

"Oh, you needn't tell me that, I see very well

that you still have something on your mind that prevents you from laughing."

The guests were prompt and thought the dinner excellent. M. Batonnin ate for four, which, however, did not prevent him from having time to eulogize each dish, and compliment the host, the young lady of the house, and even the cook, upon them; if there had been a cat or a dog it is probable the animal also would have had its share in this distribution of compliments. At dessert, the conversation turned on the newly married couple, M. Gerbault regretting that he could not have them to dinner, and M. Batonnin said, still smiling,—

"Yes, they make a charming couple, and can M. Monleard use his right arm now?"

"Yes, it is entirely cured. He suffered long enough for a fall on the staircase."

"Ha! ha! a fall on the staircase, ha! ha! M. Gerbault tells us that as if he really believed it."

"What do you mean? What are you trying to say," said M. Gerbault, who could understand nothing of M. Batonnin's words, nor of the malicious air with which he pronounced them; while Adolphine changed color, for she feared that her father was going to learn the truth. M. Clairval alone remained indifferent to what was passing, but he looked at the soft-mannered gentleman with an expression which signified,—

"I think that you are going to say something stupid."

Monsieur Batonnin continued to smile, and answered,—

"Come, now, M. Gerbault, you know very well that your son-in-law's wound was the result of a sword thrust which he received in a duel. He did not want to tell everybody that he had fought a duel, above all—I understand very well."

"Why, monsieur, what you say is not reasonable," said Adolphine. "If my sister's husband had fought a duel, I should certainly have known it."

"How do you make that out, my dear young lady? If they kept it a secret from dear M. Gerbault, they might easily have hidden it from you also."

Monsieur Gerbault, whose face had become serious, said to M. Batonnin,—

"Come, monsieur, make yourself altogether plain. If my son-in-law has had a duel, I repeat to you that I am altogether ignorant of the fact. Now if you have positive information on that subject, will you kindly communicate it to me; it is at least desirable, it seems to me, that in regard to this matter, I should know as much as a stranger."

"By Jove, my dear monsieur, I only learned it by chance a couple of days ago. I met Madame Delbois, who was at your daughter's wed-

ding, and that lady left the ball at the same time as the latter, so you can understand they both found themselves waiting in the court, while they were looking for their carriages."

"I don't see, up to the present, what connection there is in all that to the duel."

"Allow me, we are going to get there. While these ladies were waiting, an individual with a very bad face, also came out of the restaurant. He was behind Madame Delbois, when the latter said to one of her friends, 'Why the bride is going very early!' Then this individual with the evil countenance, dared to shout, quite loud,—but really, if you have not the slightest knowledge of this individual, I fear, if I go any further, that I shall say something which might be very disagreeable for you to hear."

"If what you have to tell M. Gerbault may prove disagreeable to him," said M. Clairval, "it seems to me, M. Batonnin, that you would have done much better to remain silent as to the whole affair. Since M. Monleard has kept this matter of the duel secret, he was, no doubt, afraid that it might vex his father-in-law; and, frankly speaking, it was not tactful of you to come here to tell a thing which no one asked you to tell."

"But, pardon me, M. Gerbault begged me to tell him what I knew."

"Come, M. Batonnin, finish your story, I

beg of you. What did Madame Delbois hear this gentleman say?"

"Your son-in-law heard him also, and this is what brought about the provocation. As for me, I only repeat to you what Madame Delbois told me. I was not there, I was dancing at that moment."

"Finally, M. Batonnin, what did this man say?"

"I give you my word of honor, my good M. Gerbault, that it costs me a good deal to repeat to you this malicious insult. I am very sorry indeed, to have spoken of the matter, although it was innocently done."

"Please come to an end."

"This individual called, when he saw the bride, 'Ah, here is the perfidious Fanny!'"

Monsieur Clairval began to laugh. M. Gerbault judged it wiser to do the same, and seeing that Adolphine was careful to imitate them, M. Batonnin who had expected to produce a great effect, was quite amazed when he saw everybody laugh. He stammered then,—

"Oh, so you think that is droll, do you?"

"By Jove, M. Batonnin, with all your hesitancy, I thought you were going to tell us something scandalous. Frankly, it seems to me that these words spoken by a man who was no doubt intoxicated, and whose speech was perhaps involved, did not deserve such a preamble as you have made."

"It seems that your son-in-law did not think as you do, for he went up to the man and they exchanged cards."

"Did Madame Delbois see that too?"

"Why, yes."

"How comes it that the lady, who loves to talk, as far as I can see, has not spoken sooner of things that took place more than six weeks ago?"

"That is quite simple; the lady started the next morning for the country, and she did not come back until the day before yesterday."

"Oh, you have told me enough about it, come, let us take some coffee then."

"All the same, my dear Batonnin," said M. Clairval, laughing, "your news has fallen flat. That's vexatious, isn't it?"

Monsieur Batonnin compressed his lips, and, something extraordinary for him, did not smile.

Hardly had they finished their coffee, when the Comte de la Berinière was announced.

"You see I came early, having got rid of the person with whom I dined as soon as possible," said the comte, going up to Adolphine and kissing her hand; she seemed little flattered by this galantry."

"That is very kind of you; come, we are going to give you a game of bezique."

"Oh, presently; I must first beg mademoiselle your daughter, to give us a little music. When

one has once heard her sing, he has but one desire, and that is to hear her again."

"Certainly, if it is agreeable to you, monsieur. I have not enough talent to wish people to entreat me."

"That is to say, you are always charming."

"We others who are not so music mad, are going to have a three-cornered game of bezique. You will play, Clairval?"

"I will do anything that you like."

"And you, M. Batonnin?"

"Nothing would be more agreeable to me than to take part in your game; however, I think that bezique played by three people is less amusing than when played by two."

"Excuse me, it is even more spicy."

Adolphine placed herself at the piano, and the comte seated himself near her, darting glances at her which the young girl did her best to avoid.

Monsieur Batonnin, who had placed himself at the card table, turned his head every moment to look towards the piano, in order to see what they were doing there, and he also tried to hear what they were saying.

"We are going to play with four packs?"

"Yes, only we take out two cards, two eights, so that each one may have his exact number at the close."

"Very well; we give how many cards to each one?"

"Eight."

"There are some persons who give nine."

"That makes the game too easy."

"And we shall make the game?"

"Fifteen hundred."

"How much shall we put on it?"

"Whatever you like, monsieur. You settle the stakes."

"Well, we don't want to ruin ourselves; let us say two francs each."

"Two francs it is."

"I've seen this game played at five hundred francs a hand," said M. Batonnin.

"Devil take it! that's quite extravagant. Of course, if one were very rich—"

"Oh, it's not always the richest people who play the highest. It is those who wish to pass for millionaires and who need money."

"This good M. Batonnin, with his air of noticing nothing, he takes note of and observes everything."

"Me, oh, by Jove, no! I said that because I have heard somebody else say it. I have a hundred in aces."

"That is a pretty point."

"I remember now that it was at M. Monleard's that I saw them playing bezique at five hundred francs a game."

"At my son-in-law's? Oh, you are mistaken. He doesn't play so high as that."

"I ask your pardon a thousand times, but it really was at his house. But there's nothing astonishing in that, since they play whist at a hundred francs a stake at his club."

"He assured me that he would not frequent his club any longer."

"I heard that fact from some one who played a game with him not a week ago."

"Come, M. Batonnin, it's your play; why don't you attend to your business?"

"I'm all attention, my dear M. Gerbault; oh, I assure you, I'm all attention. Ah, Mademoiselle Adolphine is singing something very pretty."

"Five hundred."

"There, you've let M. Clairval make the five hundred."

"I could not prevent him."

"Yes, you could; there were only three tricks to play and you had two aces of the club suit."

"Well, that only made two tricks."

"I should have taken the third with my ace."

"Oh, you think that we could have prevented monsieur from scoring five hundred."

"That is evident. I don't think that you play this game any better than you do whist."

"I certainly don't play it at five hundred francs a game like your son-in-law, but I don't believe that he played bezique well, I think it was all chance."

"You see it is quite the contrary; besides, skill is necessary in playing all games."

"Even at loto?"

"Certainly, you can forget to mark."

Adolphine was singing a second song, when Anatole de Raincy was announced. The arrival of the young man who lisped interrupted the music, and seemed to very greatly vex M. de la Berinière, who then decided to approach the players. The game of bezique was finished, and had been won by M. Clairval.

"Take my place," said M. Gerbault to the comte.

"Thank you, but I only play bezique for two."

"Well, then, play it with M. Batonnin. I will have a game of chess with M. Clairval if that suits him."

"Anything will suit me."

"Unless, however, M. de Raincy wants to make a third at whist."

"Oh, thank you, I don't care about playing. I should infinitely prefer to have a little music with mademoiselle, if it will not be displeasing to her."

"On the contrary, monsieur, it will please me very much."

"I have brought some pieces that I can sing fairly well, some songs, some duets. You can play at sight, I am sure."

"I can at least try to, monsieur, if they are not too difficult."

"Here is the song of the 'Dame Blanche.' I'll sing that; it suits my voice."

"Very well, I'll accompany you."

"If this gentleman sings as he speaks," murmured Batonnin, smiling graciously at the comte who had taken a seat opposite him, "that must produce a singular effect."

"He would have done much better to let us hear Mademoiselle Adolphine."

"Yes, she has a voice. Shall we make the game two thousand?"

"That suits me to a T, monsieur."

"And we have four packs."

"Very well. But there are some men who have a mania for singing."

"Yes, and who very often sing out of tune—as for instance—I score sixty with queens."

While these gentlemen were playing, young Anatole was shouting at the top of his voice,—

"Come, lovely dame, I wait for thee, I wait for thee."

"It's horrible, it's horrible," said the comte.

"It sounds like the creaking of wagons when they are stopping," said Batonnin.

"I have the two hundred and fifty."

"It seems that we are not to see Madame Monleard and her husband this evening."

"No, they are at a grand party. I score forty with bezique."

"Ah, Monleard doesn't want his little wife to be bored. They are incessantly at parties."

"Yes—that's all very well, if it only lasts. I score eighty with kings."

"And why should it not last? By Jove, that fellow makes my ears ache with his 'I wait for thee, I wait for thee.' I'm sorry for Mademoiselle Adolphine."

"Haven't you heard, monsieur la comte—twenty with diamonds—that M. Monleard gambles at the Bourse in a frightful manner? Another marriage, in spades this time."

"By Jove, no. But what is the meaning of this? I'm scoring nothing at all. That cursed singer is the cause of it."

"I'm also informed that a short time ago he lost considerable sums."

"You know one must never believe half they say."

"Here is the five hundred. Devil take it! how you are drawing me on. Ah, they are singing a duet now; at least we shall hear Mademoiselle Adolphine, if she could but drown that gentleman's voice."

"I've made eleven hundred in this game."

"And I a hundred and twenty. I am quite in the rear. Shall we play for the fifteen hundred?"

"Certainly, when one has three beziques that is fifteen hundred; but in counting them up it is necessary not to have touched one's five hundred."

"Yes, yes, I know it. What are they singing now?"

"I think it is still the 'Dame Blanche.' "

"It's your play, M. le comte."

"Yes, that is correct; excuse me, but this gentleman's voice stuns me. What a squawler. Poor young lady, she must have a great deal of patience."

"I score forty with trumps."

"You score everything, M. Batonnin. You are very fortunate to be able to attend to your play."

"I try not to listen. Forty with bezique."

It was difficult not to hear the young singer, who was then shouting,—

"That hand, that lovely hand."

with all the strength of his lungs.

The duet ended, Adolphine declared that she was tired, and left the piano.

"I can well imagine that she is tired," said M. de la Berinière. "She ought to be, at least; to accompany that gentleman, to sing with him, was rather tough business."

"I have won, M. le comte."

"Well, you must give me my revenge. I can attend better to my play now. I shall no longer have to hear this gentleman's hissing. He's a veritable serpent, is that young man."

But M. de Raincy had seated himself beside Adolphine, and he talked to her while they were playing. Naturally, the young people spoke in a half whisper, so as not to disturb the players,

and this conversation of which he could not catch a single word, seemed to vex the comte still more than the preceding music. And Batonnin profited by the faults and distractions of his adversary, although he said to him in a petulant tone,—

“Monsieur le comte is not in the mood for playing this evening. I score one hundred and fifty.”

“In fact, I am rather distracted. Well, Mademoiselle Adolphine, you’re not singing any longer.”

“Oh, no, monsieur, I am resting.”

“Good heavens! take care,” said Batonnin, “you will give the young man the idea of beginning again.”

“Why, no, I was addressing Mademoiselle Gerbault. I’m sure that M. de Raincy is boring her greatly at this moment. I wanted to try and help her to get rid of him.”

“Forty with bezique. You think that he is boring her? But you may be mistaken. He is rather a nice-looking fellow, is this M. de Raincy. A hundred with aces.”

“Why, the idea! call him a good-looking fellow? He looks foolish, simple, self-sufficient.”

“He’s well built. Five hundred.”

“Confound it! you never miss. And that pronunciation, do you admire that also?”

“Not in singing, at least. Take your card, if you are quite ready, M. le comte.”

"Ah, that's correct; I don't know what I am doing. Whose play is it?"

"It is mine, and I have again the honor of beating you. I make the fifteen hundred."

"Can it be possible?"

"Look here, if you doubt it."

"By Jove, I am just as well pleased that it's done with. I am not at all in the mood for playing this evening."

Monsieur de la Berinière rose and went over to talk with Adolphine. The latter, as indifferent to the compliments of young Anatole as to the gallantries of the old comte, was as affable with one as with the other; for neither one of these gentlemen made any impression on her, and it is easy to be amiable when the heart is not touched.

The evening was ended; but before leaving, the comte and M. de Raincy each said some words in a low tone to M. Gerbault; this so puzzled M. Batonnin, that in going out he took the way to the kitchen.

"It appears to be your turn to have distractions," said M. Clairval to him in a tone of rail-lery.

"Me? why, not at all. I made a mistake as to the door, which might happen to anybody. You perhaps thought that I had something to say in a low tone to M. Gerbault, like those two gentlemen who went out before us."

"Oh, did those gentlemen whisper to our friend

Gerbault? I confess that I had not noticed it; and, furthermore, it is quite indifferent to me."

"Why, so it is to me, certainly, although I have an idea, I suspect, what they had to say to mademoiselle's father."

"Ah, you have a suspicion. Devil take it! then you have the gift of divination."

"One need not be a sorcerer to divine certain things. Do you want me to tell you what I conjecture?"

"No, I thank you, M. Batonnin, keep that to yourself. I do not appreciate conjectures. I only like official things. Good evening."

"Which means that he is vexed at being unable to guess," said Batonnin to himself, taking another road. "Now, I would wager six francs against twenty, that young de Raincy and that old de la Berinière are in love with the charming Adolphine; and I would bet again, twenty francs against thirty, that neither of them are pleasing to the young girl. So much the better, there is all the more chance for me. We will wait and give them time to cook their mutton, as they say very vulgarly. It is an old proverb. I am like Sancho, I love old proverbs."

Adolphine also had noticed the short private conversation which M. Gerbault had had with the comte and M. de Raincy. When the company had gone the young girl approached her father, and said to him, smiling,—

"These gentlemen were very mysterious with you, father, for I saw M. de la Berinière, and later on M. Anatole, whispering to you in the corner."

"By Jove, my darling, I don't know as yet any better than you what they had to say to me; but each one of them wanted to make an appointment with me for to-morrow, saying that they wished to speak to me on a very important matter. I said to M. de Raincy, 'I shall expect you at eleven,' and to M. de la Berinière, 'You will find me here on the stroke of one.' In this way to-morrow, I suppose, between two and four, I can satisfy your curiosity and tell you in my turn what these gentlemen have to confide to me; unless, indeed, it is a matter of serious things which one does not tell to young girls. But I don't think it is."

"You don't think so? You have a suspicion then what it may be, father?"

"Why—after all, as they will tell me to-morrow, it is useless to make suppositions. There is something about which I am more concerned."

"What is that, father?"

"It is that duel that Batonnin was telling us about. I pretended not to believe it before him; but if all that we have heard is true, of course it was not in falling on a staircase that your sister's husband was hurt. And it must have been Gustave with whom he fought."

"Oh, no, father, no, I swear to you it was not with Gustave."

"Ah, you know the truth then, and you said nothing to me about it."

"My sister and her husband did not wish the event to be known, and Fanny made me promise not to speak of it to you."

"Well, with whom was it that Auguste fought?"

"With a man who was tipsy, and did not know what he was saying, that is all. And Auguste did not attach the slightest importance to it."

"So be it, I hope it is so, indeed; but I am nevertheless persuaded that Gustave had something to do with it, and I repeat to you what I have already said in regard to him, that young man must not come here again. Come, I am going to bed, and to-morrow we shall see these gentlemen. Good night, my child."

"Good night, father."

Adolphine went into her bedroom; the two appointments made with her father by two men who, during the evening, had overwhelmed her with their attentions, caused her a vague uneasiness. A secret presentiment told her that the matter related to herself, and she longed to know whether her fears were well founded.

The next day Adolphine did not leave her room, in order that she need not meet the gentlemen who had appointments with her father. At eleven o'clock precisely, she heard the bell

ring, and her maid, Madeleine, came to tell her,—

“It is a big young man who sang with you, yesterday evening, mamzelle. He asked for monsieur, your father, and he is with him.”

“Very well, Madeleine; if by chance this gentleman asks to see me, you will tell him I have a headache, and cannot leave my room.”

“Very well, mamzelle.”

“And when he is gone you will come and tell me.”

“Yes, mamzelle.”

Adolphine counted the minutes, but twelve o'clock struck and young Anatole had not left. The young girl grew impatient, she murmured,—

“What can this gentleman possibly have to say to my father that can take him so long? For a young man, he is very gossipy. If he doesn't go soon he will meet the comte. After all, that is quite the same to me.”

Finally at half-past twelve, young de Raincy had taken his leave. Madeleine came to warn her young mistress, and the latter was on the point of going to her father, when the bell rang again.

It was M. de la Berinière. The latter had come in advance of the time, but he was immediately shown in to M. Gerbault. Madeleine came to inform Adolphine of this new visit, and

the latter gave her the same orders in case the comte should ask to pay his homage to her.

This time the conversation did not last so long. M. de la Berinière left within the hour, and then M. Gerbault came in search of his daughter, rubbing his hands with an air of great satisfaction, a sign of contentment which is common enough to everybody. Why, do you ask? No one has ever been able to find out.

"Well, father," murmured Adolphine, in a rather tremulous voice, "the gentlemen both came."

"Yes, my darling. They were both very prompt. The comte came even earlier than the time appointed. That is easily understood, the older ones are always in the greatest hurry."

"And what did they say to you? Must you keep it secret?"

"Not at all, since these two conversations concerned you only."

"Concerned me?"

"Yes, and, frankly, I had almost guessed it. And you?"

"Me—why—I beg of you, my dear father, tell me at once what these gentlemen wanted to ask of you?"

"Well, my dear, the same motive brought them here. They came, both of them, to ask me for your hand."

"My hand!"

“In the first place, young de Raincy said to me; ‘I love your daughter. She is an excellent musician, and I adore music. We will make it all day long. I have no profession, but I have fifteen thousand francs income in government bonds, and on that people who are not ambitious may live very well. And music is a pleasure which necessitates very little expense. I have noticed that Mademoiselle Adolphine has no taste for balls, fêtes, and grand parties like her sister. I can, therefore, hope that with me she may be happy. You will give her twenty thousand francs dowry, and that will be sufficient for me. I shall not ask anything further of you.’ So much for the first, let us pass to the second.

“Monsieur de la Berinière was more lively, more impetuous in his demands. He said to me, ‘I adore Mademoiselle Adolphine, I am madly in love with her; her delightful voice has turned my head, and for her I am willing to renounce my liberty. As for that, I believe I was destined to enter your family. I will not hide from you that I was excessively taken with your eldest daughter; but Monleard was quicker than I and deprived me of her, so this time I declare myself promptly, because I do not wish that your younger daughter should escape me, as did her elder sister; unless, indeed, she is unwilling to have me. But I dare to hope to the contrary. I am no longer in my first youth, but I have a heart as sensitive as it

was at twenty; finally, I offer mademoiselle thirty thousand francs income, and the title of comtesse, which is always flattering to a young woman. This is what I put at her feet with the most ardent love. Will you acquaint her with my offer, and to-morrow I will come back for my answer.'"

"Oh, good heavens! and what did you answer to all that, father?"

"My dear child, I said all that a father must say to honorable men holding good positions in society, who ask the hand of his daughter. 'Your proposals flatter and honor me, and I will not put the slightest obstacle in the way of your wishes; but as marriage is an act which must decide the happiness of a whole lifetime, I am resolved to allow my daughters full liberty in the choice of a husband, and that I will never exert my will to constrain theirs.'"

"Oh, my good father, that is kind indeed, not to constrain your children."

"Now, my darling, it is for you to choose. These two unions are equally suitable. M. de la Berinière will make you a comtesse, and offers you thirty thousand francs income. That is very enticing; but it is true he is sixty years old, and that is less enticing. M. Anatole de Raincy is not a comte; however, he is of a very old family, he has only fifteen thousand francs income, but he is not twenty-seven years old, and that in

itself is riches. Now you are well informed as to the gentlemen who aspire to your hand. You must reflect and make your choice."

"My reflections are all made, father. I want neither the one nor the other of them."

"What! you refuse them?"

"I refuse them both."

"But that is not right, my child. These two unions are honorable. It will be difficult for you to find better in regard to money, and I fear that you will not even find any as good."

"You know, father, that I don't care anything about money."

"My darling, it isn't necessary perhaps to love money as your sister loves it; but neither is it to be despised. It is a great aid to happiness. Come now, between ourselves, why do you refuse these two husbands? The comte, I will again concede it, is too old for you. But M. Anatole is young and rather a fine man."

"Father, I refuse them, because I wish to love my husband, and I could never love either M. de la Berinière, or M. de Raincy."

"Then you have quite decided?"

"Entirely decided. You will tell these gentlemen that I am unwilling to marry just yet. Well-bred men understand that that is a polite way of refusing them."

"Then, since your resolution is quite settled—you are hardly a bit like your sister; you see she

is rich and happy, and always in the midst of festivities and pleasures."

"I don't envy her her happiness, and I could not find it in such an existence as she leads."

"Then we'll say no more about it."

Monsieur Gerbault left his daughter and she could see by the expression of his eyes that he was not pleased with her for refusing the good matches which he had offered. As to Adolphine, she said to herself,—

"I cannot marry one of these gentlemen, since I love some one else. He whom I love will never marry me, I am well aware of that, for he doesn't even think of me! However, I should like to have the right to still think of him."

CHAPTER IX

GUSTAVE'S UNCLE. A GENTLEMAN AT THE CAFÉ A HAT AND A WALKING STICK

AFTER his duel with Auguste Monleard, Cherami had returned to his hotel whistling a polka. He had found his hostess at the same place she had occupied at his departure, on the doorstep. Madame Louchard was extremely curious, and this doubtful quality having been strongly aroused at seeing her lodger go off with the elegant young man, the possessor of the cabriolet, she accordingly exclaimed, on seeing Cherami returning alone,—

“Well, what have you done with him?”

“Done with what? with whom?” asked Cherami in his turn.

“Why, with that fine gentleman who went off with you on foot, which was rather singular, seeing he had a cabriolet at his orders. You could easily have got into it, both of you, since he followed you.”

“It was not worth while getting into the carriage, we were going such a very short distance,” replied Arthur.

“Where did you go, then?”

"On to that building ground, down there near the theatre."

"And what were you going to do there? Was that gentleman thinking of buying that ground?"

"Not the least in the world. We went there to fight a duel. The neighborhood was propitious for that purpose."

"You went to fight a duel? Impossible!"

"It is as I have had the honor of telling you."

"Did you fight with your fists?"

"Madame Louchard, you take us for some of the snobs with whom you are acquainted. Learn that a man like me does not fight with his fists. I sometimes apply the toe of my boot to the fleshy part of an insolent rascal who annoys me, but when it is a question of a duel, that is another thing."

"And with what did you fight?"

"With a sword."

"You haven't one."

"The gentleman had a whole arsenal in his cabriolet."

"My God! who was it who was killed?"

"Why your question is rather incongruous. Do I look as if I were dead?"

"Ah, that's correct. Then it was the gentleman. Poor young man."

"Reassure yourself, he is not dead, and he is not going to die of it. A simple wound, and yet I warned him. I said to him, 'You lunge too

much, too often; he drew a good enough blade, still, he had not my skill."

"Heedless fellow, you are always having affairs, duels, and if the gentleman had been killed, what then?"

"Then, superb Louchard, I should not at this moment enjoy the pleasure of contemplating your very strongly marked features."

"And the cause of this duel?"

"A mere trifle, a bagatelle, a joke, but the arrival of this young man prevented my breakfasting, and I experience the need of giving myself up to that important function. I will go up and get my pretty cane with the agate head, and I will go to the Véfour of the neighborhood—no, there are none about here; and as I want a very good breakfast, I'll go down as far as Passoir's."

"It's easily seen that you have got plenty of money."

"Yes, indeed, celestial hostess."

"And you won't let me have anything on account!"

"We will speak of that later on."

Cherami had taken his new cane, he put his new hat on the side of his head, and, his pocket replenished with the money he had won the evening before at écarté, he set out on his way, saying to himself, "I have caught my hare."

Cherami, following his custom, spent his money freely; however, it seemed that this brought him

good luck. A great amateur at the game of billiards, he did not fail after his dinner to go and take a cue in a café where he knew that they played every evening, and for some time fortune favored him with much constancy, so that when they saw him come into the café in the evening, all the billiard players frowned and muttered, "Good, here comes the invincible pool player."

But one evening the luck turned, and Cherami left the café with empty pockets, then he said to himself,—

"By all the powers, here I am again reduced to other expedients, for I shan't get my income for a fortnight, and that rascal of a Bernardin won't pay me even a day in advance; but it will only be a case of going to pay a little visit to our young friend Gustave for whom I fought a duel, and who has not even been to thank me for doing so. In truth, I did not think to give him my address, and for his part he did not give me his either, but he lives with his uncle Grandcourt; the latter is a banker or stockbroker, no matter which, I ought to find his address in the 'Almanach du Commerce.' To-morrow I shall have this address and will go and say good-day to my friend Gustave; and if he is still in despair I will go again and have dinner with him. He will tell me his troubles; as for me, I will order the dinner, and at dessert he will willingly lend me a hundred francs to fill the gap till I get my income.

That will go of itself. I feel quite sure that this dear Gustave is astonished at not seeing me and that he is looking for me everywhere; but to repair this omission, I will not leave him for a fortnight."

The next day Cherami found the address of M. Grandcourt, banker, and hastened to repair to the place. Arrived at a handsome house on the Faubourg Montmartre, he tapped with his pretty cane on the porter's square.

"Monsieur Grandcourt, banker?"

"The offices are on the ground floor at the back of the court, the door to the right."

"Very well, and shall I find M. Gustave Darlemont in the offices?"

"Monsieur Gustave?"

"Yes, the banker's nephew who is employed at his uncle's."

"Faith, monsieur, I don't know. There are several clerks, I don't know those gentlemen."

"You seem to know very little, in fact. It's all right, I will go into the offices, and I must hope that there they will know how to answer me."

Cherami went to the end of the court and entered a room where an old clerk was half lying on a big book adding up figures.

"Will you kindly tell me where I can find my friend Gustave, if you please?"

The old clerk did not answer and continued to mutter, "Forty-five, fifty-two, four, six, sixty—"

"Is the old dotard afflicted with deafness," said Cherami to himself; then he resumed very loudly, "monsieur, I asked you where is my friend Gustave's private room. Did you not hear me?"

"Eight and eight are sixteen, and sixteen is thirty-two."

"Why confound it, we have known for a long time that eight and eight are sixteen. Was it only to study such asinine things as that that you refuse to answer me?"

So saying, Cherami took the old clerk by his collar and shook him rather roughly. The latter turned around furious, shouting in his turn,—

"Monsieur, I am adding up my running accounts, and when I am adding up, no one has the right to disturb me. Do you understand?"

"Well, you are a very nice fellow, you are, thank you; they should frame you and hang you up over the mantelpiece."

"Monsieur, what do you mean?"

"See here, old foggy, we are not going to quarrel. Where is M. Grandcourt's nephew?"

"How should I know, monsieur? I am adding up, I do nothing else, and I cannot talk. You have disturbed me, I shall have to begin all over again."

"Well, begin all over again. Nothing forms

youth like addition. First, however, you must answer me."

"Monsieur, at the end of this passage is M. Grandcourt's office. Go and say anything to him that you like, but leave me to add up my columns."

"Well, all right. I believe that the abuse of addition has stunted your growth."

Cherami went into the passage; arrived at the end, he turned the knob of the door and found himself in the banker's office. M. Grandcourt was occupied in writing at his desk. Accustomed to having his clerks frequently enter his room, he continued to write without raising his eyes. Cherami shut the door, looked for a moment at M. Grandcourt, and said to himself,—

"This is our uncle, I recognize him. I have only seen him once and that was enough for me; besides he has one of those peppery faces which are quite too spicy to be forgotten."

And approaching the desk, he took off his hat, saying,—

"How do you do, dear uncle? You are busy at work? Confound it! it seems that every one works hard here, for I found in the first office down there a kind of invalid who was so buried in his figures, that you couldn't see any more than the tip of his nose. Well, how are you? Can't you place me? I am Arthur Cherami."

M. Grandcourt raised his head and looked in surprise at the person who stood before him.

"Monsieur," he answered, "monsieur, may I know what you want? what has brought you here? for, no doubt, I have not fully understood what you said to me."

"Oh, you didn't understand me? Are you also occupied in addition? It would seem that that obscures the intelligence. But this is not what it should be, you don't recognize me *then*, dear uncle."

"No, monsieur, no; and I confess that I don't understand what you mean by this title of uncle which you so obstinately confer upon me."

"Oh, that was a sort of pet name, because I am your nephew's intimate friend. That dear Gustave who was so disconsolate on the day that his perfidious Fanny was married to another, and I on that same day, dined at Deffieux's. He absolutely insisted on speaking to the beautiful bride, but you came like a bomb into our room, and you led the poor fellow away."

"Oh, very well, monsieur, I know now who you are. Yes, it was you who were at the restaurant with my nephew, and you wanted to oppose my bringing him away."

"Jove! he was so desirous of seeing his Fanny again."

"And did you think, monsieur, of all that might

have resulted from an interview between Gustave and that young bride?"

"Why, no more I think than what has happened—a duel, and that is all."

"What do you mean by that, monsieur? My nephew has not fought a duel, I am certain. I did not leave him until the moment of his departure."

"Did I tell you that he had fought a duel? It was me; but it comes to the same thing."

"What, you have fought a duel—you?"

"I should say so, nephew, I mean to say, uncle. I even gave the young husband a pretty stroke of the sword in the arm. For the matter of that he is a brave fellow, but he lunges too much, and that is dangerous."

"You have fought with M. Monleard!"

"Why, yes, and what of it? You open your eyes as wide as carriage doors. What do you think so extraordinary in that?"

"Why, monsieur, what you have done is frightful! You have compromised that young woman, you have compromised my nephew, you have—"

"Oh, confound it! do you know that you bore me? What kind of an uncle are you, to think ill of a person for the services he has rendered your nephew?"

"Monsieur, take a lower tone if you please."

"Oh, so that doesn't suit you, well then—but no, you are Gustave's uncle, I cannot fight with

you, that would make him angry. After all, it is not with you that I have business, and if that old baked apple down there had promptly informed me where I could find your nephew, you would not have had my visit. Tell me quickly, and I will make my bow to you."

"You wish to see Gustave?"

"Why, that is what I came for."

"Monsieur, my nephew is not in France now—he is in Spain."

"In Spain. Really, you are not gammoning me?"

M. Grandcourt made a movement of impatience. Cherami resumed, "Does the word displease you? You astonish me! It is adopted now in good society. It is like saying you will give a person the sack. They say I've sacked such a one, which means sent him away, made him cut a caper. We have enriched the French language with a great many of those more or less picturesque sayings. The Latin tongue is a great deal more forcible, more complete; one may say in Latin things that one never dares risk in French. Take for example Plautus in his comedies—it is in 'Casine,' I believe, that an old lover cries, thinking of his mistress,—

'Jam, Hercle, amplexari, jam osculari gestio!'

"Ah, they were humorous, those old Greek and Latin authors! Write comedies now like those of Aristophanes and you would be well received.

They are beginning already to think Molière too light. We have become very strict, very delicate in our language. Does that mean that we have also become more virtuous? Frankly, I don't think so. Habits, costumes, manners and customs change, but passions, vices, and follies remain the same!"

The banker's forehead had relaxed a little as he listened to Cherami. He looked at him more attentively, and said to him,—

"Monsieur, how comes it that having received an education, understanding the classics as you do, you do not put your knowledge to better use?"

"To do what? To buy myself a coat? Is that what you mean?"

"Something of the kind."

"Monsieur, I have independence, liberty."

"Those words have been greatly abused, monsieur, for a long time past, and if your love of liberty obliges you to go about shabbily clad, it seems to me that a love of work would be preferable."

"Do you say so? But my dear monsieur, it seems to me you are giving me lessons, and I have never taken those from anybody."

"That is, perhaps, where you have been wrong."

"Confound it—you are fortunate in being the uncle of a young man for whom I felt from the first a sincere affection. Let us make an end of it. Gustave is in Spain?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"For how long?"

"I cannot tell you precisely."

"That is as good a way as any of telling me nothing! But when he is in Paris, I assure you I shall easily be able to find him."

"Have you anything important to communicate to him, monsieur? Tell me what it is and I will send him word of it."

Cherami reflected for a moment, then drew his hat down on his head, as he answered,—

"No, I only want to shake hands with him, inquire as to his health, and learn if he is yet cured of his love for the perfidious Fanny."

"His letters inform me that he is very well. As to his foolish passion for a woman who does not love him, I am in the hope that it will yield to absence."

"Say, rather, to the ogling of the Andalusians, for they have terrible eyes, those Spaniards: I know something about them. I have known three who—"

"Pardon, monsieur, but I am very busy, and if you have nothing to say to me—"

"Oh, you dismiss me. Very well, that is all right; I have caught my hare."

"You have caught your hare, what do you mean by that?"

"Oh, pay no attention to that. It is a little

phrase which I habitually use. It is the same thing as saying, "I have done my business."

"That is another thing, monsieur; I wish you good-day."

"And I wish you nothing at all."

And Cherami left the banker's, saying to himself, "Here is an uncle as hard as nails. The idea of my borrowing money of him. I would not do him that honor. Out upon it! never! and the more so, as I am sure he would not lend it to me."

Cherami walked about for some time at haphazard, seeking to see as he went along, some person of his acquaintance of whom he might ask a slight loan, but he only saw strange faces, or if he perceived any of his former friends, they were those who turned away to avoid meeting him.

"Devil take it!" said Cherami to himself, "the day is beginning ill, and I had counted on Gustave for breakfast. It is now after mid-day and I am as hungry as a cannibal. After all, if it is necessary, I shall have to give up my new cane. I shall be sorry to do so, for it is pretty, real rattan, but I should be still more sorry not to breakfast. It must have cost thirty francs at least. A merchant will give me six for it. These merchants are quite capable of it; and yet he will look as if he were doing me a favor! I would just as soon leave it in pledge for a beefsteak and

its accessories. Let's see, we'll look for a café where they have good breakfasts."

Cherami was then on the boulevard, where he had only to make a choice of cafés, for he could not take twenty steps without seeing one. The so-called "Handsome Arthur" entered the one which had the most modern show windows, seated himself at a table, hung his hat on a peg, put his cane on a bench and called the waiter in that sonorous voice and with that arrogant tone which never fails to produce its effect on the waiters of a café.

"What do you wish, monsieur?"

"Some butter, radishes, sardines, a beefsteak chateaubriand, cooked to a turn, some roquefort and some bordeaux. We will see further later on. Go, go."

Cherami cast a glance at his cane and said to himself,—

"Surely that cane is worth quite as much as all that I have ordered. I might even add some coffee and a glass of liqueur. Besides, if they are not satisfied, I will do like Bilboquet 'of the Saltimbanques.' I will pawn my signature. All the same, it is very vexatious that my young friend Gustave should be in Spain; but is he really in Spain? It is necessary to assure myself as to that."

Cherami had eaten his hors-d'oeuvre and was about to attack his beefsteak chateaubriand,

when a little gentleman, dressed rather carefully, with a sheep-like face, whose denuded cranium seemed to be imploring a false wig, placed himself at the next table to our hero and sat plumply down on the cane which Cherami had placed on the bench. The gentleman rose quickly, put his hand to his leg, and exclaimed, "By Jove, what am I sitting on?"

Cherami withdrew his cane and placed it upright between himself and the gentleman, saying to him,—

"Fortunately you have not broken it, for that would have cost you dear."

"Monsieur, I did not do it on purpose."

"All the same, had you broken it you would have had to pay for it."

"And I have hurt myself badly."

"If it had been a thorn stick it would have hurt you a good deal worse."

The gentleman did not seem to be consoled; he paid no attention to the stick, and occupied himself only in rubbing the injured part. Then he asked for some grog, took a newspaper and began to read, looking ill-tempered, but all the while he was eating, Cherami continued to talk.

"As for me, I was once in an inn, I had just alighted from my horse, having ridden six leagues without a stop, and I was naturally excessively tired. On going into the room I went and threw myself into an armchair, which was near the fire-

place, but a piercing cry escaped me. Everybody hastened around me. 'What is it, monsieur, what is the matter, monsieur? What is the matter? What has happened to you?' But I could only ejaculate, 'I don't know what I sat on, but I am hurt, grievously hurt.' The hostess, a jolly woman with sparkling eyes and a fine figure, wanted to assist me, but the husband interposed. He examined me and found that I had seated myself on a nail, monsieur, an enormous builder's nail. How did it come there—with its point in the air? That was what nobody could explain, but the important thing was to get it out. The innkeeper could not manage to do so. They sent for a locksmith, and even with his pincers, he had a great deal of trouble in pulling that cursed bit of iron from my person, and behold, when they had got it out it was not a nail but a corkscrew."

The bald gentleman made no reply to this story, except a low growling, and continued to read his paper. Cherami looked at him for some instants, saying to himself,—

"Where the devil have I seen that phiz before? I can't seem to remember, but I am sure this is not the first time that I have been so unlucky as to meet this ugly, bald gentleman. Then, addressing his neighbor, who was stirring his punch, Cherami remarked,—

"My adventure with the nail does not interest you, monsieur?"

"Monsieur, I paid little attention to it. When I have a newspaper in my hand, I am all taken up with my reading,—

"And you place credence in all that is in it, no doubt."

"Why should I not, monsieur?"

"Ah, I believe you are quite capable of it; but you don't know how to manage your grog, monsieur."

"What do you mean by that—I don't know how to manage my grog?"

"No, you don't at all. You stir and stir and you don't crush your slice of lemon with your spoon to get the juice out."

"What does it matter to you, monsieur, whether I crush my lemon or not? If it pleases me to drink my grog like that, I have a perfect right to do so."

"Oh, of course, of course, I was only giving you good advice; you refuse it, but just as you please. I'll wager that you are looking in the advertisements of your paper for a pomade to make your hair grow."

"No, monsieur, I would have you know that if I wanted to have hair, I could have as much of it as anyone else."

"I don't doubt it—for money. You might put three wigs, one on top of the other, and that would make you a fine head of hair."

“But I don’t like anything artificial, monsieur. I detest anything false, monsieur. The truth before all!”

“Ah, I understand, then, why you put your cranium in evidence; but if your intention is always to show us the truth, that may lead you very far. The costume of that goddess is rather slight, or rather she has no costume, and shows herself in a state of nudity. Try going out like that, for the love of truth, but I don’t believe that a sergent de Ville would admit that excuse. Why, monsieur, it has already been proclaimed that it is not good to say all that is true. We must know that neither is it good to show all that is true. In general, people are right to hide their infirmities, their deformities and all that is unpleasant about them; and they do well in seeking to appear as pretty, or as little ugly, as possible. To embellish, to seek to please, such seems to be the object of nature in all and everything. See a mother with her chubby-faced darling, her first care is to adorn it, to seek to embellish it. Women are born with the instinct of coquetry. Men have less of it because the multitude of their affairs obliges them to care less about their persons. When you take an apartment your first care is to embellish it, and if you have a garden you adorn it with flowers, if you give a dinner you like your table to be elegant, fastidious and dazzling by means of the richness of its

appointments, and this glass as sheer as muslin, from which I am drinking my wine, adds to the effect of my bordeaux, and renders it mellow—yes; for if served in a jam pot this wine would not seem half so good—and you yourself, if they had brought your grog in a basin, it would not have been very pleasing to you, eh? The devil carry me away if this little man is listening to me at all!” said Cherami, interrupting himself, “but where in the world have I seen that head before. Waiter, waiter, my coffee.”

In throwing himself back in his seat, Cherami caused his cane to fall against his neighbor, the latter then turned and pushed the cane away, muttering, “Have you made a wager that—”

“What do you mean by a wager, because that cane slipped towards you? Why, you must be very sensitive, my dear monsieur, you who love the truth so much.”

The bald gentleman made no answer; but as he pushed away the cane this time, he looked at it and from that moment he did not take his eyes off it.

“Ah, you are admiring my cane now,” resumed Arthur, “you are beginning to understand that it would have been very unfortunate to break it. It is very choice.”

The gentleman did not answer, but he lifted his eyes and began to look at the hat which Cherami had hung on a peg. He examined it so care-

fully that Arthur impatiently said to himself,—

“Well, did you ever, what is the matter with the animal now? Will he have done looking at my hat and stick after a bit? He is beginning to bore me not a little.”

Finally the little gentleman decided to speak.

“Monsieur, this cane you have here with the agate head is quite peculiar.”

“You think that my cane looks singular? You mean to say choice, no doubt.”

“Monsieur, that cane—the more I examine it, a rattan, oh, it is indeed the same and the hat also. Even the ribbon of the binding, very wide ribbon.”

“When you have finished talking to yourself, monsieur, you will explain to me what you mean, will you not?”

Cherami began to divine with whom he had to do; but he did not wish to look as though he did.

“Monsieur, this is the sum of the matter; I had a cane exactly similar to that one; that is to say, I could swear that this is the same.”

“There is nothing extraordinary in that. Every day one sees canes that resemble each other. There are many people who mistake one man for another, yet there is an expression and animation in the physiognomy of a man that you seek in vain on the head of a cane.”

"Monsieur, allow me to say that all canes do not have an agate head carved like that one."

"If they all had one, that would be common, and I should not want it."

"In fact, monsieur, you must know that I lost my cane and my hat at a wedding which I attended nearly two months back; that is to say, I did not exactly lose them, but they were exchanged and I was the loser by this exchange. In place of my hat, bound exactly like that one with wide ribbon, and the same shape, he left me a miserable wretched thing, and I was obliged to buy a new one the next day; and instead of my cane, I found a kind of walking stick fit only to beat coats and not worth more than six sous."

"And from that, confound it, monsieur, what do you pretend to infer? The cane that you have lost, with the agate head, your hat bound like mine—do you know that you are beginning to make my ears burn devilishly? Is it your intention to say that I have stolen your cane?"

"No, monsieur, but—"

"Then you have insulted me, and I cannot suffer an insult. When we leave this café, we will go and cut each other's throats like the fine fellows we are."

"Never, monsieur, the idea! I was in error, monsieur. No, no, that is not my cane, let it be as if I had said nothing. I beg your pardon."

The little bald gentleman, who was trembling like a leaf, seemed to wish to hide himself under the table before which he was seated. Cherami after reflecting for some moments, looked at him, this time with an amiable expression, and said to him,—

“At this wedding of which you were speaking to me just now, did you not lose anything else?”

“I was in very bad luck that night. On arriving for the ball, I lost one of my gloves, a new straw-colored glove. It was returned to me later on, it is true, but in such a state!”

“Ah, now we come to it, I recognize you!”

“You recognize me?”

“Of course, you are Monsieur Courbichon.”

“That is my name, in fact, but how do you know it?”

“Why, by Jove, we met at my friend Blanquette’s wedding. My dear Monsieur Courbichon, I have been looking for you for a long time past.”

“You have been looking for me, monsieur? And why, may I ask?”

“And why, to return your cane.”

“Why, monsieur, I do not know if—”

“And your hat also, if you exact it, only as that you have now is newer, you would again lose by the change. But the cane is quite at your service. Don’t believe me capable of keep-

ing that which does not belong to me. It was only the result of an error."

"Ah, monsieur, I am sensible of—"

"You can quite understand that before returning this cane which I carried away by mistake from my friend Blanquette's wedding, I wanted to be quite certain of restoring it only to its real owner. Have you my walking stick?"

"No, monsieur, I haven't it now; I don't even know what has become of it."

"Oh, confound it, I'm very sorry for that. You thought it was an ordinary walking stick. You did not see that it was the sinew of an animal; it came from China, the Chinese make a good many canes from the sinews of animals, because they are pliant and never break. You valued it at six sous, but it was worth forty francs."

"Ah, had I but known that."

"You would have been more careful, in fact, it is a slight misfortune, you will pay my score; we will dine together, and we shall be quits."

"What, monsieur, you will—"

"Here, take your cane, it is a beauty, everyone looks at it. My dear Courbichon, I am delighted to have restored it to you, but I deeply regret my Chinese walking-stick. It is very rare to find one in Paris, for they seldom come from China. Hallo, waiter, how much do I owe you?"

"Seven fifty, monsieur."

"Very well, this gentleman will settle it."

M. Courbichon did not seem delighted at paying for his neighbor's breakfast; however, he carried out the sentence imposed on him. The gentlemen left the café, and hardly were they outside, when Cherami passed his arm under that of the owner of the cane, saying to him,—

"Where shall we go to now?"

"By Jove, monsieur, I intended to go for a walk in the Champs-Élysées. It is fine weather, we are at the end of September, and we must profit by these last fine days. Then I am very fond of seeing them play at bowls."

"Well, that will suit me. That's exactly the thing I like. Let us go to the Champs-Élysées and see them play bowls. Walking is good for the digestion, gives an appetite. We will dine near there. I know all the good restaurants of the Champs-Élysées. Don't be uneasy, Papa Courbichon, you are with a jolly fellow, he knows how to live."

"Monsieur, I have no doubt of it, but—"

"Confound it, how handsome your cane is. Everybody admires it as they go by. It must have cost you a pretty penny."

"I can't tell you as to that, monsieur, it was a present from my nephew."

"You don't say so. I was saying to myself just now that it was surprising that M. Cour-

bichon bought this cane. Your nephew has good taste. What does he do?"

"He is in business, he has gone to America. This cane was his, he gave it to me, saying, 'I am going to a country where they have plenty of canes, it is needless for me to take that.'"

"Did he expect to go out walking with a sugar cane in his hand?"

"I can't tell you that, for I don't know. This cane suited him, because if need be the head would serve as a means of defence."

"My Chinese walking-stick was also a famous weapon."

"What, a walking-stick?"

"Remember it was made from the sinews of an ox. I could have slaughtered a calf with it."

"What a strange idea of these Chinese, to make canes with sinews—"

"A new proof, my dear M. Courbichon, that the Chinese are much further advanced than we are—much more progressive. They make houses of india-rubber."

"It must be hardened then."

"I don't know whether it is hardened, nor do I care. By Jove, M. Courbichon, you must confess that there are some very lucky chances, and that we must both have been inspired to go to that café to-day."

"It is certain, monsieur, but for that—"

"You would not have seen your beautiful cane again. Are you married, M. Courbichon?"

"I have been, monsieur, but I am a widower."

"A fine position for a man who is still young, and who is formed to please."

"I am fifty-five, monsieur."

"It's the finest time of life, and that in which a man makes the most conquests, because he knows better how to set about it. Ah, I should very much like to be fifty-five myself. I hope to attain that age, though I have not yet done so. Have you any fortune?"

"Between five and six thousand francs income, amassed in business, trading in dried fruits."

"A pretty penny. It is not a splendid position, but that pleasing mediocrity so vaunted by Horace—you know Horace?"

"Yes, I have seen that play at the Theatre Français."

"Enough, we will pursue the theme no further. Have you any children, worthy Courbichon?"

"I have a daughter, monsieur, she is married, I have established her in business."

"In dried fruits, also?"

"No, monsieur, in olive oil."

"Devil take it, that's quite different, but it keeps longer. You have not another daughter?"

"No, monsieur."

"So much the worse."

"What makes you say that, monsieur?"

"I feel that I bear such a strong attachment for you that I should have asked you for her in marriage. By Jove, yes, I would have fettered my liberty, which has not yet happened, but there is a time for everything. Does your son-in-law enjoy good health?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, excellent."

"So much the worse."

"What makes you say so much the worse?"

"Why, if he were to die soon, I could marry his widow."

"What an idea, monsieur!"

"But he is in good health, so that is done with and we will speak of it no more. Reassure yourself, I don't want to kill him. Ah, if he had offended me, I don't say—"

"A thousand pardons, monsieur, but I should like very much to know your name."

"My name? You have forgotten, then? At young Blanquette's wedding you must have heard of it often enough while I was dancing with Aunt Merlin."

"I don't remember it."

"I am called Arthur Cherami."

M. Courbichon, who thought that this gentleman called him his "cher ami," ¹ answered, "Oh, yes, you are called Arthur, is that all?"

"What do you mean by is 'that all'? I told you Arthur Cherami."

¹ Cher ami — dear friend.

"Yes, I understand, Arthur, that is a very pretty name. You are in business?"

"I do nothing at all. I live on my income, like you."

"Oh, that is different. Certainly, when one has a sufficient income he may walk about as he pleases."

"That is true, my dear Courbichon. I see with pleasure that we think the same. We were destined to become intimate friends; as they say in Arabia, 'it is written.'"

As they talked, that is to say while Cherami talked and his companion listened, hard put to it to get in a word here and there, they had arrived at the Champs-Élysées. Our two promenaders directed their steps towards a piece of ground where several games of bowls were in progress. They looked on at the games. Following his custom, Cherami made remarks out loud and gave his opinion on the shots. He was not at all afraid to say, "That's very badly played indeed," right up to the one who was bowling. The bowler, a sort of street Arab about sixteen years old, came towards him looking very much vexed, and shouting,—

"What are you meddling with us for? You couldn't do the same yourself, perhaps."

"No, I certainly should not do the same. I flatter myself I should play much better than that, and if you are not pleased at my reflection, my

good man, come with me. Has any one a pistol over there? I take you for a doll yourself. We shall see who will fight the best."

The bowler departed without answering. M. Courbichon struck Cherami on the shoulder and said to him,—

"You are too quick, my dear M. Arthur. You flash up like gunpowder."

"My dear Courbichon, I am like that; but what will you? one can't remake himself. But then when you are with me, let anyone dare to insult you and by Jove, a giant, a dwarf, a colossus would be all the same to me. I would reduce him to powder instantly."

However, the young bowler who had gone off quite vexed, had formed a plan to revenge himself on this gentleman who had told him that he played badly, and his turn being come to throw the bowl, he launched it with all his might towards Cherami, hoping that the latter would receive it in his legs, but a pebble caused the ball to deviate a little, and instead of touching "Handsome Arthur" it struck M. Courbichon in the legs. The latter fell, uttering an exclamation. Cherami had seen from whence came the ball; he saw his player, who was shouting with laughter. Seizing the cane which his companion held, he immediately ran to the author of the accident, exclaiming,—

"Be easy, my poor Courbichon, I will avenge you and in a rude manner. He will catch his

hare, the rascal!" The street Arab had suddenly made off when he saw this gentleman running towards him, but Cherami set off in pursuit.

Meanwhile, M. Courbichon rubbed his legs, saying,—

"This is the first time such an accident has happened to me since I have watched them play bowls, and it is all the more strange, because I was not standing in the way of the game. It must have been done on purpose. But why should they take aim at my legs? I have not made any remarks, nor had the slightest discussion with any of the players. I shall certainly bear the marks of this, and where is this M. Arthur gone? That man is altogether too hasty."

After a few minutes Cherami returned, looking animated, triumphant, and exclaiming, "you are avenged, my dear Courbichon, and what may be called completely avenged. The rascal has received all he deserved—and here is the proof of it." So saying, he presented his new friend with his cane, broken in two pieces.

M. Courbichon was abashed, and looking with an air of consternation at the pieces of the cane, he murmured,—

"Oh, my God, it is broken!"

"That is true, it is broken, but on the back of the rascal who threw his ball at your skittles, I mean to say at your legs."

"What a pity! You struck him too hard!"

"One can never strike an enemy too hard."

"It was such a pretty cane."

"You have the pieces, or at least the head, you can have it put on another stick."

"It was a real malacca."

"By Jove, the proof that it was real is that it was broken immediately; but there are other malaccas in the shops."

"I am very sorry that you have broken my cane."

"If you had not lost my Chinese wand, I would have thrashed him with that, and yours would not have been broken."

"It is very vexatious to me, my beautiful cane."

"Confound it! are you going to weep over it? You ought rather to thank me that I avenged the insult offered to your legs. Come, take your cane and let us go and have dinner, the walk has given me an appetite."

Poor Courbichon took the pieces of his cane with a piteous expression, and allowed himself to be led off by Cherami, who took him by the arm and led him to one of the best restaurants of the Champs-Élysées. The gentlemen seated themselves out-of-doors at one of these tables which are surrounded by hornbeam trees in such a way as to form verdurous cabinets. M. Courbichon placed the pieces of this cane on a chair beside him, and stifled a profound sigh, for he

was so frightened of his new friend that he dared not even show before him the vexation he experienced at seeing his beautiful cane broken. Cherami ordered the dinner, saying,—

“Leave it all to me, I’ll order the dinner, and as we are reasonable men, as we have no women with us, we will not commit any extravagances. We don’t want to have a feast; but we do want a good dinner. Is that your opinion?”

“Perfectly—still—”

“You have just such a disposition as I like. I will mark with a white cross, ‘album dies!’ this day upon which I found you again, and was permitted to restore your cane to you. I regret your having lost my Chinese walking-stick, but you have your cane, and that is the principal thing.”

Every time that his new friend spoke of his cane, M. Courbichon made a horrible grimace, but he did not dare to permit himself the slightest complaint. These gentlemen dined. The one always talking as he ate, the other eating and hardly talking at all, and although Cherami had announced to his host that their menu was reasonable, when the bill was brought for him to pay, it came to twenty-two francs.

“It is not too dear,” said Cherami, passing the bill to Courbichon, “for we have dined very well and we have drunk our three bottles.”

The little bald gentleman did not appear to

be of the same opinion. He turned and returned the bill in his hands muttering,—

“Twenty-two francs, twenty-two francs.”

“Well, my brave Courbichon, that is not swallowing the sea. How many times, in a tête-à-tête with a pretty woman, have I not spent ten times that amount on a fine dinner; but then we had everything of the best and earliest. Bunches of asparagus at thirty francs, strawberries at fifty francs, pineapples, constance wine. Women adore that wine, they are willing to get tipsy on constance in the bottle. Have you sometimes given these private dinners, amiable Courbichon? Oh, you must have given them often. That was how you lost your hair, was it not, old boy?”

“Twenty-two francs, twenty-two francs.”

“Those figures seem to bother you a great deal. Do you find the total wrong?”

“No, it isn’t that, but I am afraid I haven’t enough money on me. I have already paid a good deal at the café this morning. I did not know that I should have to spend so much to-day. Will you oblige me by lending me what I am lacking?”

“I would lend it with the most lively pleasure, my honorable friend, but just now as I felt in my pocket, I found that I had forgotten my purse, which for the matter of that, often happens, for I am very absent-minded, and I may as well

tell you that when I discovered it, my intention was to borrow a few pistoles from you, as is often done between good friends, for of what use is friendship if it is not to oblige? Oh, divine friendship, a gift from the gods."

"My God! what are we going to do if we cannot between us rake up enough to pay for our dinner?"

"Don't put yourself in such a funk about it. I have found myself in that position more than once. You can leave your cane in pledge."

"My cane! that might do very well when it was whole, but I can't offer pieces of cane as security."

"Then, my good fellow, leave your watch."

"I don't wear one since my last one was stolen."

"Don't make yourself uneasy about it, they will give us credit on our good looks."

"Let me see, I'll gather all up that I have. Feel in your pockets also."

"Oh, it is needless for me to do that. I never put silver in either of my pockets. I either have a purse, or I have none."

M. Courbichon gathered all he found in his pocket, but he only managed to get together twelve francs, two sous, but suddenly, on looking again in his pocket, he drew from it something carefully wrapped in paper, and that something was a gold ten-franc piece. The bald gentleman's face cleared, he exclaimed,—

"Ah, the ten francs that I lent Mathieu, and that he returned to me this morning. I had forgotten them. Thank God, that makes up the amount, and two sous with it which will be for the waiter."

"In your place," said Cherami, "I should keep Mathieu's ten francs, in order that we may have something to refresh ourselves when we get back, and I should leave my cane for the rest."

"What, you want me to ask credit, and I have the means to pay?"

"You have not the means to pay, for with a bill of twenty-two francs you cannot give less than twenty sous to the waiter. If you give him two, he will throw them in your face."

"If he refuses them he will have nothing at all, so much the worse for him; but I shall pay my bill."

"And suppose, as we go back, that we need something?"

"We have dined too well to need anything."

"On the contrary, you may have indigestion. You look very red now, you may need some sweetened water."

"I can get along without it. I am not in the habit of being ill."

"There are a great many things that one hasn't the habit of; but they happen to us; like sudden death, for instance. One certainly has not the habit of that, and yet it takes one all of a sudden."

No matter what Cherami said, M. Courbichon remained firm. He called the waiter, paid for his dinner, and told him that he could not give him more than two sous, because he had nothing left but bank notes which he did not wish to change.

They left. The little bald man still had the pieces of his cane, but he wore a very solemn face. Cherami, who found no further amusement in his company, presently left him, saying,—

“What is your address, my dear fellow? I will go soon, to greet you with a few friendly words.”

M. Courbichon muttered, with an air of vexation, “It is useless for me to give it to you, monsieur, I leave to-morrow for the Touraine, where I expect to settle.”

“What, you also are leaving Paris? Oh, if you go to Tours, send me some prunes. Rue d’Orillon at Belleville, hôtel du Bel-Air, but be sure and pay the charges on them.”

M. Courbichon bowed to Cherami, and departed as fast as his little legs would carry him, putting a piece of his cane in each pocket.

CHAPTER X

A CONSTANT MAN. A FASHIONABLE WOMAN

MONSIEUR Gerbault had carried his daughter's answer to the two persons who had made proposals for her hand. Young Anatole de Raincy had taken the thing quite indifferently; he had contented himself with remarking to the young lady's father,—

“I am sorry for it, my dear M. Gerbault, because our voices blend so capitally. I am sure that we should have sung well together, and I am so passionately fond of music that we must necessarily have been very happy.”

The Comte de la Berinière had not taken Adolphine's refusal of his hand with so much philosophy; he had exclaimed,—

“Really, my dear Gerbault, I am not fortunate with your daughters. The one married just as I was thinking of asking for her hand, the other will not have me, for I understand very well that her answer is a refusal politely disguised. Come, I must put up with it as best I may. To endeavor to console myself, I am going to travel in Italy. The Italians cannot vie with our girls, but they may afford me distraction.”

Some days later in fact, the Comte de la Berinière left Paris, but there was one person who could not understand Adolphine's conduct, and that was Fanny, her sister. On learning that she had refused to marry M. de Raincy and the comte, she came one morning to see Adolphine and said to her,—

"Is it really possible what my father has told me, that you have refused to marry when two such fine matches offered for you? But no, it cannot be. You cannot have done that, or if you did, you must have been ill. You were not thinking what you said when you gave my father that answer."

"Yes, indeed, my dearest," answered Adolphine, smiling, "I knew very well what I was saying. I had carefully reflected when I refused to marry these gentlemen?"

"Really, I do not understand you. What reasons could you have had? What motive could have dictated your refusal? The Comte de la Berinière has thirty thousand francs income, and he would make you a comtesse. Think of that, a comtesse. Would it not be delightful to hear yourself called Madame la Comtesse?"

"That tempts me little."

"The comte is no longer young, it is true; but once you are married, if you knew, my darling, how little attention one pays to one's husband's

age! If Auguste were sixty years old now, that would be exactly the same to me."

"I do not think at all as you do, and I have already told you so."

"But I have experience now, and you ought to listen to me. But let us admit that you have refused the comte because you thought him too old, which is pure childishness,—you had not that motive in regard to M. de Raincy. He is young, he is a handsome man."

"He looks stupid, and self-sufficient."

"Why, what has that to do with it? I have always heard tell that a stupid man made an excellent husband. I wish, indeed, that mine were stupid. He would not hurl sarcasms at me from time to time, little words of raillery when I occupy myself with dealings at the Bourse, the fluctuations of railroad stocks. Auguste is witty, very witty certainly, but what good does it do me that he should be witty and pleasant in society? At home a husband only uses his wit to make game of his wife. M. Anatole de Raincy has not the comte's fortune, but he has a very pretty position in society. What can you hope for better than that?"

"I hope for nothing."

"Then why did you refuse these gentlemen?"

"Because I love neither the one nor the other."

"Oh, what a fine reason, my poor Adolphine, you are a simpleton. Happiness in the house-

hold is not brought about by love, but by riches, luxury; the being able to buy everything that one pleases, to have fine toilets which make the other women envious, to go every day to a ball or party, to have fine boxes at the play, not in sighing by one's husband and taking care of the pot-au-feu."

"I have already told you that I have not the same tastes as you."

"Oh, people always say that, and in the depths of their hearts they would be pleased to shine also; but you are romantic. Your heart is occupied, perhaps, by a secret love. Oh, yes, for you to refuse two such good offers, you must needs have a passion for someone."

Adolphine reddened, but she hastened to answer,—

"No, you deceive yourself, I am thinking of no one. You are wrong to say that."

"Well, then, my dearest, I repeat that you did not show common sense in refusing these two gentlemen. Good-by, I am going to choose a headdress of flowers for this evening, I am going to a grand party, and I want to eclipse all the other women."

Some time after this conversation, Adolphine was alone; she was dreaming of him whose image never left her, for she had not told the truth to her sister in answering that she was not thinking of anybody. But hers was a love that one does not confide, except to a heart capable of under-

standing it, and she knew well that Fanny would not understand hers.

Suddenly Madeleine came into her mistress's room and said to her,—“Mamzelle, here is a young man who wants to speak to you.”

“To me? It is my father, no doubt, with whom this gentleman has business.”

“No, mamzelle, he only asked to see you; and, besides your father is out.”

Presently the door opened again, and Gustave made his appearance before Adolphine. The young girl uttered an exclamation, for she had immediately recognized him, and she was obliged to support herself on a piece of furniture, so much was she moved.

“What, Monsieur Gustave, is it you?” she murmured.

Madeleine went away, for she divined from her mistress's eyes that this visitor was not displeasing to her.

“Yes, Mademoiselle Adolphine,” answered Gustave. “Yes, my kind sister. Ah, permit me to give you that name as of old, for we haven't fallen out, we two, have we? You have not repulsed me, and I dare to hope that you have kept a little of that sweet friendship that you formerly evinced for me.”

Adolphine was so disturbed that she could barely stammer, “Of course—yes—there is no reason why I should not be the same with you;

but will you not sit down, M. Gustave? Good heavens, it's singular, it is only five months since we saw each other, and I think you are so changed. Not for the worse, quite otherwise, but you look more serious, more reflective than you used. Perhaps it is your travelling which has given you that expression."

Adolphine was right. The five months which he had passed away from France had singularly changed Gustave for the better. He had lost that harebrained, heedless expression, which was formerly so noticeable in him. Now he was a man, young, of course, but with a serious, steady, reasonable expression, which indicated one who thought before speaking and reflected before acting. His physiognomy had greatly gained by this change; he appeared more cold, perhaps, but people understood that they might rely upon his word; in fact, the slight cloud of melancholy which still hovered about his forehead, perhaps lent more charm to the softness of his eyes and the expression of his voice.

Adolphine had seen all that at a glance. It does not take more than that for a woman to make the portrait of a man. She tremblingly indicated a seat to Gustave, and the latter at once sat down beside her with a readiness that showed he had no hidden thought.

"I do not know whether travelling has changed me," said the young man. "It has, perhaps,

had an effect on my judgment, and rendered me more apt in business. I am well aware now, that I formerly did things which were quite outside the pale of common sense, follies which now I shall never again repeat."

"Ah, you are cured of your love for Fanny!" cried Adolphine, with an expression of joy which she could not master.

"No, my dear Adolphine, no. That was not what I meant to say," answered Gustave, sadly. "That love is so deeply rooted that I have not yet been able to banish it from my heart. I only meant to say, that now this unfortunate passion will not cause me to commit those follies, those inconsiderate actions of which I was formerly guilty. I am a man, and if I suffer, I know at least how to hide my grief. I know how to respect the happiness of others, and the desire to disturb it is the last thing in my mind. I understand at last that I ought, above everything, to avoid the presence of her who cannot, who ought not to compassionate the sorrow which she has caused me."

Adolphine turned away her head to hide the tears which moistened her eyes, as she murmured,—

"You love her as much as ever, then?"

"I don't know whether I love her less or more. I don't know how much I love her, and I would give all the world if I could forget her. But I

cannot; despite myself, her image is always present with me. I forget that she played the coquette with me, that she pretended to love me, only to disdain me later on. I say to myself that all women seek to please, and that they cannot love all the men whom they charm. I say to myself that M. Auguste Monleard offered her a brilliant position, all the pleasures, all the enjoyments, all the luxuries, in fact, which for a young woman make up the happiness of her life. All this I say to myself, and I can understand very well how she could refuse the hand of a petty clerk to accept that of a rich and fashionable man. If I am unhappy, I can only take it as my luck, and I see Fanny so charming, so worthy of shining in society! She will never be mine, but I love her; yes, I shall always love her. They say that men do not know what constancy is, but you see that it is quite the contrary, Adolphine; you see that one of them knows how to love faithfully, and by ill luck those are the ones who are not loved."

It was some time before Adolphine answered; her breath oppressed her, she could not restrain the tears which obscured her sight, but Gustave saw them, he seized the young girl's hands, and pressed them in both his own, exclaiming,—

"You are crying, my kind sister, my sorrows have caused you tears. Forgive me for coming here to sadden you with my troubles."

"Yes, it does cause me grief to see you unhappy; but really it seems to me that you ought to try—that you don't seek to distract yourself enough; in fact, when one hasn't the slightest hope one ought to forget."

"Oh, nothing would make me do that."

"That is possible. And how long have you been back in Paris?"

"Only since yesterday evening, and you see I came running to you this morning."

"Oh, yes—to talk to me about her."

"Yes, I admit that; but I came also to see you, you who have always evinced so much friendship for me, and whom I am still so happy to call my sister."

"Oh, of course, because that was the name you gave me when you were going to marry Fanny. But you do not know, I have not yet dared to tell you, that my father says you must come no more to see us."

"Come no more to see you, and why is that?"

"Why, because of that unfortunate duel."

"A duel, what do you mean? What duel are you talking about?"

"What! don't you know about it? Hasn't your uncle spoken to you about it?"

"I told you that I only got back yesterday evening. My uncle conversed with me on the affairs of the bank, things far more important in

his eyes than anything else. Tell me what duel it is you mean."

"You remember that gentleman with whom you dined on the day of my sister's wedding?"

"Yes, an original whom I met, who had compassion on the state of exasperation in which I then was."

"Was he a friend of yours?"

"I repeat to you that I had known him only for a few hours. But on that day I was out of my head. You are well aware of that, my dear Adolphine, for on that occasion you still found time to come and say some consoling words to me. What about that man?"

"Well, on that night, when my sister left the ball with her husband, they found him in their way just as they were going to get into the carriage; and the man, he was tipsy, of course, insulted my sister."

"The wretch, he dared—"

"Yes, he said, 'Here is the perfidious Fanny.' My sister, who herself heard the words very well, told me about it. Was it not quite insulting? And you yourself, M. Gustave, to be frank, did you not on that day more than once call my sister by that adjective?"

"Possibly I did, but then I was delirious, I did not know what I was saying. That did not give this gentleman, whose name I do not even remember, the right to repeat my words."

"Auguste heard what he said too, and the next day he fought a duel with the man."

"And the result of this duel?"

"Was a deep sword wound, which my sister's husband received in the forearm, and which for six weeks, at least, obliged him to wear a sling."

"By Jove, that event might have occasioned annoying scenes between the newly married couple; it might have disturbed the domestic happiness of your sister. She must have accused me of being the first cause of this duel, really it is very provoking!"

"Reassure yourself, M. Gustave, ah, you little know Fanny. This event troubled her little. Her happiness was not for one moment disturbed. She participates every day in fêtes, in pleasures. She is perfectly happy."

"So much the better. And her husband, he still adores her, I suppose."

"As to that, I cannot answer you. If they adore each other, they hardly show it."

"What! Fanny does not love her husband?"

"I don't say that she does not love him, but my sister is not capable of loving as we—I mean to say as you do. She is so much taken up with her dress, the cut of her gowns. How do you think she can have time to love her husband?"

"In any case, I am quite innocent of that duel," said Gustave.

"That is what I have always told my father,

who has only known about it for a short time; for, as you may imagine, they kept it secret. M. Monleard's wound was said to be the result of a fall on a staircase."

"And why is your father unwilling to receive my visits any longer? It was not a crime to love his eldest daughter, and to aspire to her hand. It is true that I was quite poor then, to-day I might have offered her more. My uncle is very much pleased with the manner in which I now occupy myself with business. He said to me this morning, as we were at breakfast, 'After to-day I will give you an interest in my business, and whether it increases or not, you shall have not less than ten thousand francs per annum.'"

"Why, that is very nice, M. Gustave, and I am very much pleased for you."

"Kind little sister, if you only knew how indifferent was this increase of fortune to me. It is not that in which I place my happiness."

"Oh, nor I either, but since so many people think otherwise, perhaps we are wrong."

"I am thinking of your father's not wishing me to come—"

"In the first place, he was quite persuaded that there was no need of saying anything to you on that subject, and that you would surely have not the slightest desire to come and see us."

"Why should I not?"

"I don't know why you shouldn't. I don't

think as my father does. Something told me that you would come again, in order to have news of Fanny, in order to be able to talk about her. I guessed rightly, did I not?"

"Oh, yes, you read my heart."

"I knew very well it was only for that reason you thought of coming here."

"You don't think then, that I like you and your father?"

"Ah, I don't say that; but my father was afraid—what if you should meet my sister here?"

"I should know enough to conduct myself with her as if she were a person entirely strange to me. Does she often come to see you?"

"No, not often, she has so many other visits to make. She knows so many people now."

At this moment the bell was heard.

"Good heavens!" said Adolphine, "if that should be my father."

"Well, what if it is? I should offer him my hand, and I am sure he would not refuse it."

"But if it should be—"

Adolphine had not time to finish her sentence, the door of her room opened suddenly, and her sister came in.

Fanny was resplendent in her elegant toilet and jewels, and, like all women for whom adornment is a special study, it must be said that she became them well, and that they added greatly to the attractions which she had received from nature.



On seeing Gustave Darlemont, the young woman was not at all disturbed. She smiled graciously on him, and her vanity seemed flattered that he to whom she had refused her hand could see her now in all the brilliance of her toilette and her fortune. Adolphine, on the contrary, became pale and trembling. As for Gustave, he could not hide the emotion he experienced at seeing Fanny again, and above all at seeing her look so charming.

"How do you do, little sister," said Fanny, kissing Adolphine. "But I am not mistaken, this is really M. Gustave? I am delighted to see you again, monsieur."

Gustave could hardly stammer, "Madame, I confess that I did not expect to meet you here."

"It seems to me, however, it is natural enough that I should come to my father's. It is true that it doesn't often happen, I have so little time to myself. When one goes into society one has so many visits to pay—to receive; to dress one's self, to give orders when one is having people. That reminds me, in six days we are giving a grand party to inaugurate our winter soirées. That was what I came to tell you about, Adolphine, that you might get a ravishing gown ready. Do you understand? But I shall have to give you some advice, for you are not up in the latest fashions. But I thought you were travelling, M. Gustave?"

"Mademoiselle, oh, pardon, madame, I have just got back from Spain. I was there nearly five months."

"Ah, that is why you are so brown, but it isn't unbecoming to you; quite the contrary. And did you enjoy yourself there?"

"Enjoy myself, madame, not precisely. It was not to that end that I went there."

"They say the women in Spain are very pretty. That their eyes in particular are dazzling. Is that true, M. Gustave? Did you see in that country eyes that surpassed those of Frenchwomen?"

"I saw none, madame, which could be compared to—" The young man stopped and resumed, "I saw none which could make me forget those of the Parisians."

"Well, I declare, that is very complimentary, and you are now altogether settled in Paris?"

"I do not know, madame, that will depend on—my uncle."

"Well, monsieur, while you are here, if it would be agreeable for you to come to our parties, M. Monleard would be delighted, I am sure, to receive you; besides, he allows me to give what invitations I please, and he does the same. I make his friends altogether welcome, and he does the same by mine; in this way we are always in accord. Well, next Tuesday, as I was saying to my sister, we shall give a grand party. Noth-

ing will be lacking, concert, ball, cards, supper—we shall pass the whole night at them, and enjoy ourselves greatly. You must be there. We shall have all Paris, that is to say, of the best society, artists, and celebrities. Will you come?”

Gustave was quite amazed at hearing this invitation addressed to him, and more than amazed at the light, offhand tone in which it was made; he experienced more pain than pleasure, and bowed low to the young woman as he answered,—

“No, madame, I cannot have the honor of accepting your invitation.”

“Oh, and why is that, monsieur?”

“Because—at this party—in your husband’s house, it seems to me, madame, that I should be out of place, and I am certain, in advance, that I should not take the slightest pleasure in it. Allow me to offer my thanks, and to say good-by.” Then approaching Adolphine, who had listened to all this without proffering a single word, Gustave pressed her hand, and whispered to her,—

“Good-by, my only friend! ah, your father was right, it would be much better if I had not come here again.”

Gustave had gone. Adolphine could hardly hide the grief she experienced. As to Fanny, she went to admire herself in the glass, and she said,—

“What is the matter with M. Gustave now?

He assumed a tragical air as he left. It was not polite of him to refuse my invitation. I should have thought, on the contrary, it would have pleased him very much. There are a good many young men who would be delighted to be able to come to our party."

"M. Gustave should not be merely a young man to you just like any other, and I can't imagine how you could have such an idea as to invite him to go and see you," answered Adolphine, in a trembling voice.

"And why not? why should you be astonished at it?"

"Why, after all that passed between you before your marriage—"

"What has that to do with it? M. Gustave was in love with me, but there are a good many to-day who are in love with me, who pay me court even. That does not prevent their coming to dance at our ball; on the contrary, they have engaged me in advance for I don't know how many contradances, but I accepted only those who pleased me. I would have done as much by Gustave, or rather I should have shown him more preference, I should have given him more contradances."

"Why, don't you see that Gustave loves you still; that he cannot get accustomed to seeing you the wife of another; that it would be impossible for him to go to your husband's?"

"Do you think this young man still loves me to such a point as that?"

"Of course, he was telling me so himself when you came in."

"Oh, poor fellow, I am sorry for him; why, I thought he had become reasonable. A constant man! why he is a phoenix, is this gentleman."

"A phoenix which you did not want."

"I don't repent of it. My husband is not a phoenix of love, I'll admit. During the first few days he adored me, and then that ceased altogether, but I wasn't foolish enough to grieve over it. He continued to lavish upon me all the pleasures, all the enjoyments that fortune can procure. What could I ask more? I think I am the happiest woman in Paris? while with this poor Gustave, this phoenix of constancy, I should have vegetated. I should have only gone to the theatres on Sundays."

"Monsieur Gustave is already in a more advantageous position. His uncle is so pleased with him that he now gives him ten thousand francs per annum."

"Ten thousand francs! Yes to be sure, that is something; just enough to keep soul and body together. But that is very different to Auguste's position."

"And then, too, Fanny, in inviting M. Gustave to your house, you forget the duel that has taken place. Your husband is aware that

it was he who was in such despair at your marriage, and that it was that which was the cause of—”

“Oh, leave me in peace, Adolphine. My husband has forgotten all that. He has quite other things in his head. When one is occupied in gaining millions, do you suppose they can pay attention to such trifles as those? Oh, good heavens, I was forgetting, in chatting with you, that I must go to my stockbroker’s.”

“Have you a stockbroker, Fanny?”

“Certainly, I also do business at the Bourse, just to give me a little amusement, but I don’t ask my husband to do it for me, because he would make game of me. Good-by, little sister, get ready for our fine party on Tuesday. We are going to have a most enjoyable time, I shall have a dazzling toilet.”

The young woman departed, then Adolphine sank back in her chair.

“Now,” said she to herself, “I can weep to my heart’s content, for he has told me that he will never come back here again.”

